

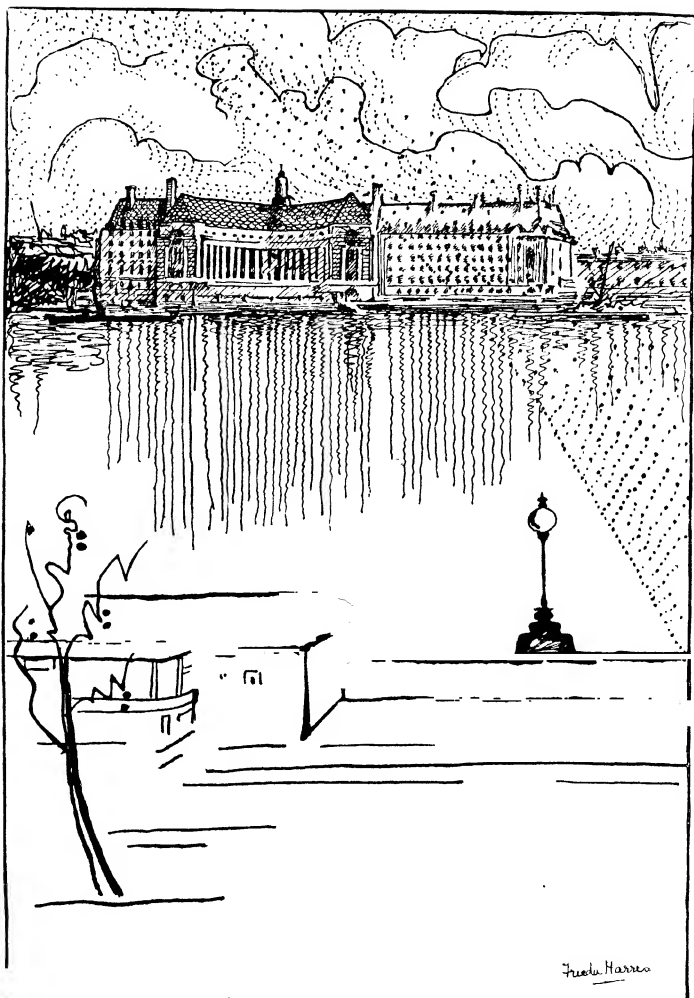
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LONDON
AND ITS GOVERNMENT



LONDON COUNTY HALL
From New Scotland Yard

LONDON AND ITS GOVERNMENT

BY
PERCY A. HARRIS, M.A., M.P., L.C.C.



ILLUSTRATED

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INTRODUCTION

LONDON GOVERNMENT sounds an alarming subject. It conjures up a vision of portly councillors, stiff-necked officials, quantities of statistics, and bundles of red tape.

Whatever may be said about the ordinary municipality, London is full of interest. Its history, the complexity of its institutions, the constantly changing character of its problems, provide material both for the antiquarian and the student. I have endeavoured to dig down through the mass of documents and reports and make the dry bones live.

The average Londoner knows little about his town, and perhaps this book will stimulate in him a little more interest in its affairs. The intelligent foreigner or visitor from the Dominions finds it difficult to understand how this great community called London is governed. He sees the Lord Mayor driven through the streets in his gilded coach, drawn by four horses and preceded by two mounted policemen: he thinks in him is embodied the great London that he sees throbbing with life. He follows his coach to the Mansion House, where he finds him living in all the pomp and circumstance of princely state. A footman, in powdered wig, velvet coat, knee-breeches, and silk stockings, opens the door to him and directs him for information to the Guildhall. When he reaches that building with its stately frontage and pleasant courtyards, and enters the fine Gothic hall, hung with banners redolent of medievalism, he feels that he has reached the seat of government of this mighty city. He wants perhaps to know about education, or the

fire brigade, and is surprised to be sent to the County Hall on the other side of the river two or three miles away. If he requires particulars on water-supply, he must visit the offices of a board sitting at Rosebery Avenue in another direction. If he be a student of traffic he will be even more puzzled. The Guildhall will be able to tell him something about it, but if he is anxious for first-hand information on the whole problem he will have to visit the Ministry of Transport, a Government department; then the London and Home Counties Advisory Committee, a composite body which is prolific with advice but has few powers; and finally he will have to go to Scotland Yard and see the traffic branch under the Commissioner of Police. After travelling from office to office, if he is still strong enough to continue his search for knowledge, and he wants to see the ordinary work of London local government, he will find that he has twenty-eight town halls to call on. This by no means completes the picture which it may be thought I have painted in rather lurid colours. In my book I have tried to put the whole subject in perspective, to give it a living interest, to connect it with the past as well as dip into the future.

I hope it will be read as a whole. Each chapter deals with London from a different angle and is self-contained. But all its problems are interconnected.

I have avoided making a mere textbook: I do not pretend that it covers every detail of administration. I am not ashamed to say that I have written for a large public because I want to interest many persons in the government of this wonderful London, which I am proud to have served for close on a quarter of a century.

In 1913 I published a book on the same subject. But almost everything has changed since then, except history. Parliament has been profuse in legislation. Education,

housing, public health, traffic, electricity, poor law, markets, all have been profoundly altered. Except for the first two or three chapters, the whole book has been completely rewritten. London is a rapidly changing town. The life is different; the traffic is speeding up; even the architecture is altering. Stucco is giving place to stone; the horse is making way for the motor; and many old institutions have disappeared.

The trouble in writing a book of this character is that almost before the ink is dry some institution has been modified by new legislation. Both London traffic and London education are in the melting-pot, and I have had to anticipate the passage into law of at least two Acts of Parliament.

That gives zest to the subject. London is by no means a dead city. On the contrary, it is a living organism, full of growth, and the old plant is throwing off new shoots.

May I conclude by thanking the staff at County Hall for the help they have given me? London is well served by its officials, county, city, and borough. That so few complaints are heard about a system in many ways faulty is due to their loyal and devoted work, little known to the public outside, but none the less excellent.

I have faith in local government. Departments of State are every year putting forward greater pretensions. But I believe that the right line of advance is through the association of the people with the administration of their own local affairs. It is in that spirit that I have written this book.

P. A. H.

LONDON, 1931.

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CHAPTER I

THE EARLY HISTORY OF LONDON

A SHORT survey of its history is necessary to understand the present government of London.

When the Romans first conquered Britain they found some of the Celts entrenched on a hill commanding the marshy lands of the Thames, on what is now known as Ludgate Hill.

This formed the site of the city of Londinium mentioned in Tacitus. It became a great Roman camp and was fortified. Eight of the great Roman roads converged there, and it must have become a centre of considerable trade. There is every evidence to show that London was a town of importance under the Romans, with Roman institutions, Roman law, and Roman customs. It was the capital of a Roman province, and had its proconsul, its amphitheatre, its baths, and its villa life.

The Roman Empire was based on the city state, and directly a new province was added to it town life was organized on the lines of the mother city, and the country round about treated as its property, partly to provide the citizens with food, partly as security against enemies. The city law prevailed in Roman towns many miles outside its walls. To its Roman origin, then, are to be attributed the peculiar rights of the citizens of London over the neighbouring counties, such as the jurisdiction of the sheriff over Middlesex.

Some sort of community seems to have lived on within the city walls long after Rome had lost its hold over Britain. Its situation on the Thames, with the Roman roads linking it up with the rest of the country, made it an ideal centre for trade. Merchants brought with them Roman law, and thus kept alive the city idea.

When, at the end of the ninth century, King Alfred found himself hard pressed by the Danes, he found within the Roman walls a safe stronghold to make his capital. In 886 Alfred appointed Ethelred its alderman, and the date is sometimes regarded as the beginning of its municipal history. Sir Laurence Gomme argues that the Anglo-Saxons being a tribal people, with their communal organization and purely agricultural way of living, never adapted themselves to town life, and even after it became the capital they remained outside the walls, except in times of stress and danger. On this theory it was the traders who kept alive Roman laws, such as their Roman rights of inheritance, a characteristic of London only taken away under George I.

But the earliest government that we know of is not Roman but Saxon; though Roman commercial law might persist, as the Anglo-Saxons percolated into its area they set up their tribal organization, with its ealdormen and folkmoot.

So that while the city's peculiar position may be traced to its Roman origin, by the time of the Conquest its government was based on the democratic idea of the "folk" meeting in the "moot," or meeting-place, and electing their own ealdormen. That it was then a place of considerable importance is proved by the charter William the Conqueror thought it expedient to give to London.

William the King greets William the Bishop and Godfrey the Portreeve and all the Burghers within London, French and English friendly. I make it known to you that I will that ye be law-worthy

as ye were in the days of King Edward. And I will that each child be his father's heir, after his father's days. And I will not suffer that any man command you any wrong. God keep you.

What is the true significance of this charter? While the rest of England was to go under the yoke of the feudal system, each man with his overlord, and while the common people were to sink into a position of little more than serfs, London was guaranteed its freedom. Charter after charter gave its citizens fresh liberties: the Anglo-Saxon tradition of freedom remained intact through all the Dark Ages. The portreeve, afterwards to become the mayor and ultimately the lord mayor, was elected by the citizens; so were the ealdormen and the sheriff in both Norman and Plantagenet times. But it was the right to have their own courts that was most valuable. The Court of Hustings, the most ancient court in the country, where the portreeve and the aldermen administered justice in the eleventh century, was never abolished; the citizens were allowed to sue and be sued in their own courts. This right was confirmed by charter by Henry I, in order to gain the support of the citizens against his brother Robert; he also gave them the right to elect their own justiciar. Thus from the twelfth century date the courts peculiar to London—the Lord Mayor's Court, the City of London Court, and also the right of the aldermen to sit alongside the judges at the Central Criminal Court.

The citizens of London were always in the van fighting against the feudal claims of the Crown, and for the right of self-government: they specially distinguished themselves in the struggle for Magna Charta, so that London is signalled out for special mention, and their *antiquae libertates* are confirmed. King John also granted to the citizens the right to elect annually their mayor. The title of the chief

magistrate of the city to be called "Lord Mayor" dates back to Edward III.

But as London grew in power and wealth so there commenced to creep in amongst the freemen the tendency, afterwards disastrous to the well-being of London, to confine the rights of citizenship to the favoured few. An early example of this appears in the fourteenth century when the citizens obtained from Edward II a charter which prohibited aliens from being admitted to the freedom of the City, except at the Court of Hustings, and an English trader only by the surety of six members of the company to which he belonged. Edward III gave them an unjustifiable monopoly in markets by undertaking not to grant one within seven miles of the City.

No doubt many of these privileges were given by the king when in need of money, or when hard pressed by his enemies. For instance, Edward III, probably in return for financial support in the French wars, gave to London special rights over the town of Southwark on the other side of the river, on the ground that it was the resort of malefactors and thieves from the City. During the Wars of the Roses support of the London citizens was purchased by various concessions. The right of aldermen who have passed the chair to be justices of the peace, to which so much value is now attached, was granted by Edward IV.

During the early Tudor period London made little civic progress. The monarchy was paramount and, like Parliament, the municipality was unable to bargain for increased powers. But the character of the City gradually changed. Many religious orders had flourished within the city walls, and it has been said that in the thirteenth century there was no street without its monastery, its convent garden, its college of priests or canons regular. The suppression



THE GUILDHALL

of the monasteries altered all this, though the power of the City seems to have prevented their property being utilized, as in other parts of the country, to endow the favourites of the king. The Grey Friars became the Blue Coat School; St. Bartholomew's, the famous hospital of that name.

Though municipally in the sixteenth century little progress was made, the City remained a political force by taking sides in the dynastic struggles or helping the Crown. In Edward VI's reign it was the help of the citizens of London that brought about the fall of the great Protector Somerset, while their loyalty to Queen Mary was largely responsible for the failure of Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion.

The city played, too, an important part in the fight against the Spanish Armada, and showed its loyalty and enthusiasm by fitting out at the expense of the citizens some thirty men-of-war.

With the Stuarts London again put forward claims to civic liberty. The financial straits of James I obtained for London three charters, the most important of which was the Metage of Corn and Coal, a right which the City possessed to comparatively recent times. The power of the Crown had already begun to decline, and the constant disputes between the needy king and the financiers of the City on the matters of loans culminated with Charles I.

The stand of the City against the unconstitutional action of Charles I will always redound to its credit. The prominent part it played in 1634 against the king's claim to "ship money" gave a lead to the whole country. The Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, and four Aldermen were all imprisoned.

It was largely due to the City's petition protesting against the ship money, the levying of taxes without the consent of the House of Commons, and the illegal acts of the Star Chamber, that Parliament was at last summoned. When

the House met, the City continued to take the lead, demanded the impeachment of Strafford, and petitioned for the redress of twenty-eight different grievances.

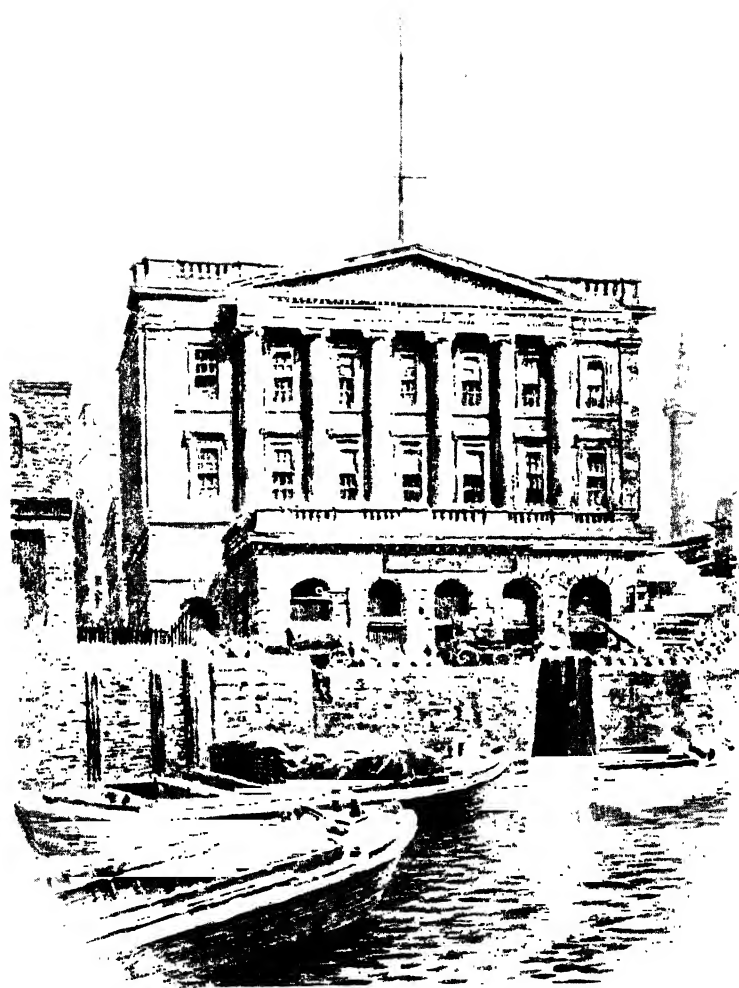
Finally, asylum was given within its walls to the "five Members," and the City refused to yield to the demands of the king for their surrender. The citizens of London accompanied them back through the streets to Westminster, where they were restored to the House of Commons by the Sheriffs.

The City of London was loyal to Parliament throughout the struggle that ensued, and supported with money the forces that fought against the king.

The Restoration gave London its opportunity. The part its citizens had played made them a force to conjure with, and Charles II, in his desire to conciliate them, gave to the corporation the *Inspeximus* Charter, on which are based so many of its privileges and rights.

But these concessions were not retained for long. In a quarrel between Charles II and his Parliament, the City took the popular side and favoured the exclusion of the Duke of York from the throne. Shaftesbury, the leader of the "No Popery" agitation, was accused of high treason, but the Sheriffs saw that the Middlesex juries were packed with Whigs, and the grand jury ignored the bill. The reply of the Crown was to issue a writ *quo warranto*, to show cause why the City should not forfeit its charter, and in 1683 after a protracted trial, on very slender grounds, judgment was entered against the City. The king offered to restore the charter on the condition that he had a veto on the election of officers, and these terms not being acceptable, he proceeded to make nominations. Some opposition was offered, but by cajolery and fraud the City was induced to accept this limitation of its powers.

James II showed no desire to conciliate the City, and it



HALL OF THE FISHMONGERS' COMPANY, RIVER FRONT

See p. 13

was not surprising that it espoused the cause of William of Orange. It was largely City money that made his expedition to England possible. The corporation was well rewarded for its support, for one of the first acts of the Parliament summoned by William and Mary was to re-establish by statute all the privileges, rights, liberties, and customs of the City as they existed before they were tampered with by the last two Stuarts.

This practically ended the fight of the City for its freedom. Till the end of the seventeenth century the City was still London, and had all the elements of a real town. The people still resided within its walls, practised their trades, and plied their crafts.

The opening of the eighteenth century saw at once the final triumph of her political claims and her decline as a living force in English life. Parliament henceforth was to be supreme. The population was to spread over the surrounding villages, and the modern town of London as we know it was to spring up rapidly. Westminster was to take the place of the City as the real and living heart of the nation's political being.

The old City had reached its limits as a dwelling-place. In the seventeenth century London was already a town of half a million people and its comparative influence was far more important than it is now. While Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow now represent almost as much as London, these places were then, relatively, mere villages; means of communication were almost nil; taking a journey was a thing of danger, and the post was non-existent. The provinces could not make themselves heard. Naturally, therefore, the City was the one living force, and in the absence of a standing army her trained bands were a power to be reckoned with.

But the town was overcrowded. Right through the seventeenth century the City was subject to terrible scourges, outbreaks of cholera, fever, and plague. The Great Plague of 1665 swept away some 65,000 people. While the City was busying itself in politics, it was neglecting its primary duty of looking after the health of the people. The outskirts of the town had no form of government, and filth reigned supreme. They were regular hotbeds of disease which, once germinated, found a fertile field for infection in the narrow dirty streets within the walls.

Probably the Great Fire of 1666 came as a blessing in disguise, clearing out the old wooden tumbledown houses that overhung the narrow lanes and by-ways where Londoners crowded together in miserable discomfort.

The reconstruction gave an opportunity for Parliament to pass the first London Building Act that made some attempt to regulate the height and material of the new houses.

Many of the people must have made the burning of their homes an occasion to move away from the centre, and the wealthier merchants went out to the country villages and built those Queen Anne and Georgian houses many of which still survive among the streets of modern villadom. Probably the Great Fire marks the decline of the City as a place of residence, and its gradual conversion into a centre of business. The development of trade and the growth of such companies as the East India Company meant not only increased wealth, but it made the City more valuable for business premises than for a residential quarter. The process of change was slow, and was not completed till well into the nineteenth century; but it all tended to take from the City the character of a town, and make it more and more what it has ultimately become—a market-place round which the business of the world revolves.

The social and political history of London in the eighteenth century gradually drifted away to the west, to the coffee-houses of the Strand and the clubs of St. James's, though for some time the life of the town hung about Fleet Street and the neighbourhood of the Temple. The last of the Georges saw the City with a rapidly dwindling population. In the nineteenth century the City still claimed to be London, though its population had long since left its walls and its area was a mere fraction of the real town. For a hundred years it set its face against reform for fear it would involve the loss of its privileges. Either it must be content to share them with London as a whole, or yield to the march of time.

CHAPTER II

THE GUILDS AND CITY COMPANIES

No survey of the government of the City would be complete without some mention of the livery companies. Historically they provide material of remarkable antiquarian interest. Their survival in their present form is something of an anomaly.

The guild or association of craftsmen or traders to defend their common interest, with their privileges and rights of self-regulation, was a feature of almost every medieval town in Europe. But whereas on the Continent, when they became obsolete their rights were taken away, in London they have never been interfered with, because their powers fell into disuse.

The craft guild, like so many things English, seems to have grown up almost imperceptibly.

The Frith Guild of Anglo-Saxon times had nothing to do with trade, and was more in the nature of a friendly society organized for the protection of life and limb. No doubt, however, it must have provided some inspiration for the trading guilds. Nothing was more natural than for men of kindred industries to form themselves into associations for mutual protection, and, as their members became more wealthy, to use those organizations against interlopers and unqualified competition. When the powers of the State were limited and confined to providing the crudest form of justice, it had no better means of protecting the public from fraud than recognizing associations of tradesmen who set

up courts of their own for self-inspection and regulation. In the Middle Ages there was no such thing as capitalism as we understand it. A man worked on his own account, and if he had employees they were apprentices, who in their turn, when properly qualified, looked to set up for themselves.

Sometimes the recognition of these guilds came from the City, sometimes from the Crown. No doubt it largely depended on which force happened to be strong at the time the craft became powerful enough to become a guild.

The nearest thing to the guild at the present time is the trade union. The guild as originally constituted was a living organism, and its funds were accumulated for the benefit of the members, all of whom practised the particular craft associated with it.

The first guild to receive recognition from the Crown was the Weavers', to whom Henry I presented a charter giving them the sole right of weaving in London and district.

But most of the guilds came into being very much as a modern trade union. Just as a number of workers belonging to the same trade might come together at some public house and start their union, so the Pepperers in 1384 feasted together at the Abbot of Bury's in St. Mary Axe and formed their guild, each member promising to pay one penny a week towards expenses. The Pepperers' Guild was the parent of what is now known as the Grocers' Company, that to-day has very little more to do with grocery than any other trade.

The association of guilds or companies with the municipal life of London began in a very commendable way in the reign of Henry III. One Thomas FitzThomas was mayor; finding the patrician class supreme, and that the king was playing on the natural antipathy of the populace to an oligarchy, in order to undermine their "liberties," he set to work to utilize the guilds as the only democratic

organization then existing. It was just the same spirit that has inspired the Labour Party to work through the trade unions. But the defeat of Simon de Montfort led to the fall of FitzThomas and the temporary setback of the popular party. It was left to Walter Hervey to complete his work in the reign of Edward I, when he actually presumed on his position as mayor to give charters to the most important of the guilds, charters which afterwards were cancelled, but which set the seal to their organization. Later kings gave the guilds royal charters, and as they grew in wealth and importance they more and more came to mould the life of the City.

As the apprenticeship system gave way before the new industrialism, their economic function sank into disuse. Membership of a guild gradually ceased to be essential to the practice of a trade or craft. As the conditions of industry changed, the guilds had the sense to forgo their industrial claims. Their political powers, however, went on. Funds accumulated for their benefit, and grew in size as estates increased in value with the effluxion of time.

The original functions of the guilds were fourfold. First, to exercise police control over its members, and provide an organization for the good of the town. Secondly, to provide a guarantee of quality and protect the public from the sale of fraudulent goods. Thirdly, to protect the members of the trade from unfair competition, and to decide what should be the qualifications for the right to practise the craft. This third duty included the right to regulate the conditions of apprenticeship. Lastly, and most important, the guild provided a friendly society to which vast sums were contributed by its members for the old and sick members of the company, and the education of their children.

Some nine of the companies still continue to exercise a few of their economic functions. The Fishmongers' Company look after the quality of the fish exposed for sale at Billingsgate; the Stationers' Company keep a register of calendars and various publications; the Apothecaries' Company examine candidates for licences to practise as apothecaries. But of the seventy-six companies or guilds that still survive it is safe to say that the vast majority have no active association with the crafts for which they were founded; and of the ten thousand odd members, not more than a few hundreds know anything about the trade of the company to which they belong. That the charter was contingent on their exercising their functions there is ample proof. Take for instance that of the Cordwainers' Company. It is a curious document, dated 1303, but it is characteristic of many:

It is ordained as for a long time heretofore it has been provided and established that those who shape and make shoes shall mix no manner of leather with other but shall make them wholly of one leather. . . .

And for the maintaining and performing of these points there are chosen four proved men of the mystery who are charged to go each month at least and at all times when they shall hear that there is necessity throughout the trade and make search; and the articles they shall find made and mixed they shall take and bring into the Chamber of the Guildhall to take their award before the Mayor and Aldermen according to the law and usages of the City of London.

The Cordwainers' Company have for centuries ceased to "make search" for shoemakers who do not make shoes "wholly of one leather," and yet the company continues to claim for itself the right to spend its funds in its own way. For nearly a century there has been a steady demand for a reform in the position and constitution of the City guilds or companies. The Royal Commission of 1837, appointed to inquire into the municipal corporations of England and Wales, made some attempt to get information about the

companies, but on the plea that the livery companies were not specifically mentioned in the commission information was generally held back.

But we have the Royal Commission of 1884 specially appointed to inquire into the City livery companies.

They reported:

On the whole we estimate the trust and corporate income of the Companies of London for 1879 as between £750,000 and £800,000, a sum exceeding the income of the two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and of the colleges therein at the time when those learned bodies were inquired into by the Commission recently appointed by your Majesty for that purpose.

They go on to say:

Taking the real property owned by the Companies at a number of years' purchase, which cannot be excessive, and the income of their personal property as representing an ordinary percentage on the capital, we are of opinion that the capital value of the Companies' property cannot be less than fifteen millions sterling.

In 1879 over £600,000 of their income was from real estate largely in London, where, during the last fifty years, land values have enormously increased, and the income of the companies in 1930 must now be nearly double what it was at the date of inquiry.

At the time of the report only about £200,000 was trust property. Most of this trust money is well spent on benevolent and educational purposes, but much of it gives a large amount of patronage to a number of people whose only right to the exercise of it is, that they purchased the freedom of the company early in life, and thus by the progress of time got on the court or managing body of the company.

But the corporate revenue is expended on more questionable objects. In 1879, £60,000 went in salaries of officials; and £40,000 went in court fees, i.e. in fees to members of the governing bodies or courts. The favoured members of

the livery who are in the court discuss over a pleasant glass of wine how their patronage should be exercised, what colleges should be helped, how their property managed, and what dinners should be arranged. Fees for this heavy work vary from half a guinea to five guineas. The Royal Commission stated that it was not "uncommon for members to receive as much as £150 a year." Membership of a company is a good investment. The commission estimated that the companies spent £100,000 in entertainments, banquets, and those social functions that make the liveries so popular. These companies not only give their guests an excellent dinner, but often handsome presents as well. The part of the companies' corporate income devoted to public or benevolent objects was estimated at £150,000. With their trust income only half their total income went for public purposes. A very considerable sum has been spent on technical education, and this work is greatly to their credit. Much has been done in this direction since the report, but considering the fact that most of the money they control belonged to the crafts with which they are associated, and the workers therein, this was only reasonable.

The commission recommended very drastic reforms in the companies, especially in the publication of their accounts, and advocated the distribution of a larger proportion of their corporate income for public purposes. It recommended the appointment of a commission for: (1) the allocation of a portion of the corporate income to objects of public utility; (2) the better application of the trust incomes; (3) the reorganization of the constitution of the companies. They gave nine good reasons for "the propriety of State intervention," and three may be specially noted: (1) That the companies were originally a municipal committee of traders and manufacturers; (2) that on their incorporation by the

Plantagenet monarchs they became a State department for the same purpose; (3) that from the period of their incorporation till 1835 it was necessary to obtain the freedom of a company in order to become a citizen of London.

All this shows that a great part of the property of the companies belongs to the citizens of London; that its disbursement should be under more adequate control, instead of being left to the chance whim of a number of men who may have no special qualification for their work.

I have dealt at length with the City companies because of the part they play in the government of the City. It is well, therefore, to understand their constitution. Membership nominally remains the same as when the companies were trade guilds. Membership can be either by apprenticeship or patrimony. The son and daughter of a freeman are entitled "by patrimony" to be members of their parents' guild. This is obviously due to the fact that children in medieval times generally followed the family craft.

In addition, the custom grew up of selling the freedom of a company, and this has proved convenient in modern times.

The governing body of a company is the master, wardens, and a court of assistants; the master and wardens are elected each year, but vacancies in the court are made by co-option, and appointments are made for life.

Membership is of three classes:

- (1) Ordinary freemen.
- (2) Liverymen, i.e. men who have paid for the ancient right to wear the "livery" of the old guild.
- (3) Membership of the court.

Such then is the organization of the famous City companies. Their political powers and functions can best be dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE CITY CORPORATION

ANY freeman of a livery company has the right to claim the freedom of the City. The liverymen who have taken up the freedom form what is known as the Common Hall. This meets annually, and elects from the aldermen two men who have filled the office of sheriff, from whom the aldermen select the lord mayor. It is true that they almost invariably choose the two senior aldermen, but they have the right to use their discretion, and on occasions have done so.

Besides their right to nominate for the position of lord mayor they elect the sheriffs, the chamberlain, the bridge-master, and the City auditors. The election of sheriff is a considerable power; there is often a contested election, and the man who can show membership of a number of companies has, not unnaturally, a very good chance of election. The lord mayor and sheriffs, who claim to be the representatives of modern London with its teeming millions, are really, then, the nominees of some 10,000 liverymen, many of whom have only bought their rights from the court, and have little interest in the City except for the banquets it provides, and the good fellowship it affords.

The lord mayor, as well as being the Chairman of the Court of Aldermen, the Common Council, and the Common Hall, has considerable judicial powers, and, as chief citizen, acts as the representative of London in all social and political functions.

The chamberlain, also elected by the liverymen, is an ancient office dating from the thirteenth century. He now acts as the City treasurer and financial expert, and is responsible for the annual budget.

The aldermen are elected by the wards, and no fault can be found with the method of election; they are returned on the parliamentary register from each of the twenty-six wards into which the City is divided. They are elected for life and, subject to their being approved by the Court of Aldermen as fit and proper persons for the position, are irremovable. The electorate of the wards is small and steadily decreasing, and comparatively few trouble to exercise the franchise: here, too, membership of a number of livery companies is a considerable qualification, and helps the candidate to secure election.

The twenty-five aldermen with the Lord Mayor form the "Court of Aldermen"; they have certain appointments in their hands, such as the recorder, the steward of Southwark, the clerk to the lord mayor. But the chief pride of the aldermen is their position as the Bench of Magistrates for the City; they are Justices of Oyer and Terminer, and as such are named in the commission for holding the Sessions at the Central Criminal Court.

The ordinary administrative work of the City is done by the Court of the Common Council.

The City claim, under a charter of Edward III, the right in their corporate capacity to amend their customs, and on this claim they have varied, from time to time, the number of elected members of the council. The membership of the Common Council now stands at two hundred and six, or sixty-two more than the London County Council, which represents the whole of London. Any one, therefore, with civic ambition, has a very fair chance of becoming a Common

Councilman. The elections are annual, and rarely contested. This body, representing only 27,000 electors, who seldom have a chance of recording a vote, has the exclusive power of conferring the honorary freedom of London.

No one grudges them such ornamental functions. But the Common Council has entrusted to its care very large sums of money, left for the people of London before they went to live outside its walls. The Bridge House Estate is one of the most important, enjoying a revenue of over £200,000, and we owe to it such bridges as the Tower, Blackfriars, and Southwark.

But the City refuses the use of funds for schemes outside its immediate area, and there is much to be said in favour of a larger view of the administration of this fund now that London has extended. But this is a trust fund, and except in respect of the extent and manner of its application, there is nothing much to be said against the way in which the money has been spent.

The City has other revenues from land, which are spent on general purposes. The net average revenue from the ordinary City estates works out at over £300,000 per annum, and forms what is known as the City's Cash. Out of this fund is borne the expense of maintaining the structure of the Central Criminal Court, the Magistracy, the Mayor's Court, the Guildhall, and also one-quarter of the expense of the City Police Force. A great part, too, of the expenses of the mayoralty comes out of this convenient nest-egg. In the year 1928-9 actually over £20,000 was allocated for this purpose; £11,000 more of it went in receptions and ceremonies, which come under very much the same heading. So in 1928-9 it can be said that over £31,000 of the City revenue went in the paraphernalia connected with the office of Lord Mayor, and it would be a bold man who would

say that at least half of this money could not be better spent in other ways.

The City is the market authority, and under an ancient charter dating from Edward III, claims the monopoly within an area of seven miles. I deal with markets in a separate chapter, but incidentally it gives the representatives of this small area the management over the markets of a population of over seven millions.

Up to quite recent times the City enjoyed many other rights of levying toll on the people of London. Under a charter of James I it levied a duty on coal; in 1667 it was earmarked for London improvements, and from time to time the right was varied and confirmed. In 1889 the duty was abolished. In a similar way, in 1872, the compulsory metage duty on grain was removed.

Nothing can be said against their education trusts, except perhaps that it would be much better if they formed part of the general education scheme of London. This applies especially to Gresham College. The City of London School is an excellent institution, run on the lines of the great endowed public schools.

The Common Council discharges the ordinary duties of a borough council: paves, cleanses, and lights the streets does the work of a local public health authority, and sees to local drainage. All this part of its administration is perfectly done. Though the expenditure is heavy, no streets in the world are better managed than those in the one square mile of the City.

The City has a high rateable value to work on, and can afford to be generous in her expenditure. Being the financial centre of the world, the property on which the rates are levied is most valuable, and though the area is small, in 1929 it was assessed at eight and one-third million

pounds, a penny rate bringing in nearly £35,000. Poplar, with twice the number of rated houses, has a rateable value of only £862,407, and the produce of the penny rate is only £3,614. The area of Poplar is more than three times as large, and the census population more than nine times as large.

The City is a county within a county, and to humour its pride it is allowed to administer many services which are carried out for the rest of London by the County Council, such as the Explosives Act, 1875; the Weights and Measures Act; the Reformatory and Industrial Schools Acts; the Shop Hours Act, 1892; the Shop Seats Act, 1899; the Employment of Children Act, 1903; the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Acts. All these could be better administered as part of the scheme of London government. It merely means extra expense to have a separate chief officer and staff for the City.

The City had its own Poor Law Union until the Local Government Act came into operation in 1930. The City Guardians did not have heavy responsibilities. Though 239,344 persons were receiving relief in the whole of London on 1 January, 1928, the number registered in the City area on the same date came to only 411. The City put up a stout resistance to the form of the change, but public opinion was too strong for it, and the City poor were swept into the vortex of the new order. By a strange turn of fate, in the rearrangement of areas constituted under the administration of the London County Council, the ancient City forms a district with its poor and needy neighbours, Stepney and Poplar.

But the City retains its mental hospital, which brings about a curious state of affairs. The first steps in the certification of lunatics rest with the Poor Law Authority,

and with the transfer of the Poor Law from the City to the County Council this duty automatically went with it. The London County Council, therefore, now certifies mental cases resident, or who "fall lunatic" in, the City area, but the City Corporation houses them. The City's institution, the Stone Asylum, provides accommodation for 589 persons, but only 212 of them at the last available date were rate-aided persons; the rest of the beds were filled by private patients.

There seems no particular reason why this hospital should not go in with the general mental hospital organization, except perhaps it provides some variety in methods of administration.

Questions are constantly arising as to the exemption of the City. The existence of a county within a county means duplication of work and waste of public money. Any scheme for London must make London one county for all purposes.

Some other examples of the City's privileged position are worth noticing. The City is the Port of London Sanitary Committee, and is charged with the duty of inspecting the ship's passengers and crew, to discover cases of infectious disease, and to see to the sanitary condition of the vessels. This work is discharged by the Committee of the Common Council. When most of the work of the Port of London was done near London Bridge there was every justification for these duties being discharged by the City. Now that no steamer of importance can get up the river as far as the City, it does seem a little outside their province, though the work is largely of a routine character. Actually, this committee has power over the estuary of that part of the Medway coming within the limits of the Port of London.

Mention may be made here of the Irish Society, an



THE STATIONERS' HALL

See p. 13

institution that dates from 1609. Vast estates were forfeited to the Crown in Ulster, and James I granted part of them to some of the City companies, while others he granted to the City with the obligation to form a Protestant plantation. A large sum of money was raised for the purpose, and now the City, through its "Irish Society," owns the city of Derry, the town of Coleraine, and the rivers Foyle and Bann. There was a revenue in 1912 of £15,000, which is spent in various ways in the district—in schools, public buildings, etc. The society is formed of six aldermen and twenty members of the Common Council. In 1891 a Select Committee of the House of Commons, appointed to inquire into the Irish Society, recommended that it should be dissolved by Act of Parliament, and that its property should vest, partly in the new Irish County Councils and partly in the municipalities of Derry and Coleraine; but nothing has been done.

The last and perhaps most valued privilege of the City is the right to manage its own police. Up to 1839 London was protected by the famous watchmen, who took over the duties of the watch and ward. When Sir Robert Peel set up the Metropolitan Police he proposed to incorporate the City Watch so as to have the whole of London under one force. But the City offered the most strenuous opposition, and put forward, as usual, the claim of their ancient charters and privileges; they were successful, and a separate force under their own control was allowed them. Thus you have the small area in the centre having a different police force from the rest of London.

The management of the police is in the hands of a committee composed of the Lord Mayor, all the Aldermen and the Aldermen's Deputies, and twenty-nine Common Councilmen, to whom a Commissioner is responsible. One-fourth

of the cost is borne by the City Cash, and the rest by the rates.

The Common Council has the appointment in its hands of a staff of very highly paid officials, some of them receiving enough to do the work of the whole of London. The town clerk is actually paid more than the clerk to the London County Council, and more than the permanent secretary to most Government departments.

The legal side of the City I have already referred to in my historical survey. The Court of Hustings still exists, though the proceedings are merely a matter of form. But the ancient Lord Mayor's Court still administers civil justice.

The City of London Court is the successor of the old Sheriff's Court, and through various Acts of Parliament now does very much the work of an ordinary county court.

The Central Criminal Court dates back to 1834, and is a good example of the special position claimed by the City. When the new County of London was created, special arrangements were made for Quarter Sessions, for the trial of criminal cases after the transfer of portions of Middlesex and Surrey to the new county, one court being set up at Clerkenwell for the north, and one at Newington for the south of London.

But the Act provided that with the consent of the aldermen and Common Council of the City the work should be merged in that of the Central Criminal Court. That this work should be merged was the obvious desire of the legislature, but to humour the prejudices of the City provision was made for it to be a voluntary act. The City, however, is jealous of its privileges, and steadily sets its face against this reform.

It became necessary to provide new court-houses at Clerkenwell and Newington, the buildings of which were

old and out of date. Considerable evidence was put forward in favour of the merger of these two courts in the Central Criminal Court, both by the Bar and the Judicial Bench, in the interests of the administration of justice and the convenience of the legal profession, as well as on the grounds of economy. But the City was adamant. On ceone privilege was surrendered others might follow, so the merger was resisted. The London County Council had to put up an expensive new building at Newington, though in these days of tube railways and motor cars the whole of the work could have been centralized at the Central Criminal Court.

The constitution of the City is certainly of interest to the student of history and antiquity. There is something attractive about its ancient customs, and Parliament is naturally loath to tamper with them. But its refusal to share its privileges with the rest of London has been responsible for much of the complexity and most of the difficulties in the government of the capital city.

CHAPTER IV

NEW LONDON AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE

UNTIL the end of the eighteenth century the City had some claims to regard itself as London. The population was already decreasing, but a large part of the life and activity of the town was still concentrated there.

But by 1821 her numbers had sunk to 124,000; now there are only a little over 13,000.

This would not give any just cause for complaint if, along with the decline in the numbers of the City, there had not grown up an outside population who were being crowded together in narrow streets without any of the amenities of municipal government. The City was constantly pushing out its citizens to make way for offices and warehouses, while it refused to recognize the suburbs that this migration created.

All round London were these new districts with no form of government but the parish with its vestry meeting.

The vestry was nominally the "town meeting," which met once a year to elect the people's churchwarden and to fix the church rate. It was a meeting at which every one in the parish was entitled to attend. There was no delegation of power, but an open meeting, which was the only way the inhabitants could express themselves.

The officers nominally responsible for the actual work were the constable, to keep order; the surveyor of highways, to look after the roads; and the overseer of the poor, to

look after the destitute. These were unpaid officers, and, generally speaking, all householders had the legal obligation in turn to fill these posts, though there was no competition to receive the honour.

The chief paid servant who did the real work was the vestry clerk, who was elected by the parishioners at a vestry meeting, and held the office for life.

Thousands of people found themselves driven outside the City, and with no form of municipal organization except these simple vestries. The unpaid officers, not having desired the position, either shirked the duties or tried to turn them to profit. The poor were neglected, the highways filthy, unpaved, and infested with thieves.

What wonder was it that corrupt men found these parishes very profitable places to exploit! Take, for instance, the parish of Bethnal Green. By the end of the eighteenth century it had become a considerable town with some 20,000 inhabitants; but, with the vestry meeting as the only instrument of government, it was not surprising that a certain Mercer for twenty-five years held the control of the whole place in his hands. By carefully packing the vestry meeting he had himself appointed to every position of trust, including the post of treasurer of the parish funds. Beatrice and Sidney Webb, in their excellent book on Local Government, show how he became a regular Yankee boss, and used his position to his own profit. Every attempt to displace him he countered by crowding the annual vestry meeting with a mob of his adherents. So serious did the matter become that a Committee of the House of Commons had to take it up, with the ultimate result that for fraudulently appropriating £925 he was sent for trial, and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment and a fine of £200. But the machinery of government was so inefficient

that in a very few years he was back again at the head of affairs. By 1828 he was quite supreme, and though by that time Bethnal Green had 50,000 inhabitants, he seems to have held undisputed sway. Not that he had mended his ways, because when in 1830 a committee inquired for a second time into his parish, it had again to complain of the corrupt partiality of the assessment and the jobbery of its officers.

The case of Bethnal Green was merely characteristic of the rest of London.

There was an even worse form of government than the open vestry meeting, which did at least make some pretence to popular government. The close or select vestry confined the rights of attending the parish meeting to a select few, or allowed the members to co-opt new members as vacancies occurred. There were many vestries of this form in London, and the opportunities it gave to corruption were unlimited. For remember this was before the creation of the Poor Law Guardians; they did not come into being until 1832.

Till 1835 London was no worse than the rest of England. The same sort of thing was going on in Manchester and Liverpool and other great towns. The people were being driven outside the City boundaries to the tender care of a form of government hardly suitable even for a country village. The need for reform became urgent, and in 1832 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the condition of the municipal corporations of England and Wales. The commissioners, after a lengthy inquiry, came to the conclusion that the evils of the municipalities, with their restricted areas, were serious ones, and recommended, among other reforms, that the old boroughs should extend their areas. But London was omitted from the report, and though it presented very much the same features as any

other corporation, it was not until after three years that the commissioners issued another volume dealing with the City of London.

Meanwhile, in 1835, the rest of England had been dealt with by legislation on the lines advised by the commissioners. In place of the close bodies who had run the provincial towns, provision was made for the election of municipal councils by the whole of the ratepayers, while arrangements were made to extend their boundaries over the adjoining areas, the new parliamentary boroughs created by the Reform Act of 1832 being as far as possible adhered to. The Act quickly worked a revolution in municipal life; the new councils brought order out of the chaos that had existed, and a local municipal patriotism has been created that has not only led to good administration, but has done much to sharpen the political life of the country.

The fine municipal services of gas, water, and trams that are to be seen right through the provinces are the outcome of 1835, and the possibilities of further extension that the Act provided have meant that public services were not limited by artificial boundaries.

London, with the little town of Winchelsea, remained the only unreformed boroughs. In due course, in 1837, the commissioners issued their London report. In a remarkable passage they recommended, without hesitation, that the lines taken in the reform of other towns should be followed for the metropolis. They reported that

. . . we do not find any argument on which the course pursued with regard to other towns could be justified which does not apply with the same force to London, unless the magnitude of the change in this case should be considered as converting that which would otherwise be only a practical difficulty into an obligation of principle . . . we are unable to discover any circumstance justifying the distinction of a small area within the municipal boundary from the rest, except that in fact it is, and has long been, so distinguished.

But they specially insisted on the unity of London. They dismissed, as likely to multiply evils, the suggestion that London should be split up into a number of communities. Here their language was no less emphatic.

We hardly anticipate that it will be suggested for the purpose of removing the appearance of singularity that the other quarters of the town should be formed into independent and isolated communities, if, indeed, the multifarious relations to which their proximity compels them would permit them to be isolated and independent. This plan would, as it seems to us, in getting rid of an anomaly, tend to multiply and perpetuate an evil.

They insisted on the importance, for the efficient discharge of public duties, of central administration of

. . . paving, sewage and lighting of streets, which as it seems to us, can never be so economically and efficiently performed in one town as when superintended by an undivided authority.

They hesitated to say whether in London they should be done by the town or by the State.

The only real point for consideration is how far these duties for the whole Metropolis could be placed in the hands of a Metropolitan Municipality, or how far they should be entrusted to the officers of your Majesty's Government.

But they advised central administration, whether it be done through the Government or through the municipality.

The "Common Hall," which, as previously explained, has the right to elect the Lord Mayor, the Sheriff, and the City Chamberlain, they condemned in no measured terms.

Supposing that any useful purpose is answered by such an assembly, we know of no circumstance justifying this restriction to the Livery. . . . There is at present a manifest absurdity in attaching political and municipal privileges to the nominees of Corporations which claim to be private, independent of the City and irresponsible.

And yet this "manifest absurdity" still exists unreformed in 1930!

But in spite of the terms of this report, for eighteen years nothing was done to improve the metropolis. How bad things were can best be realized from the speech of Sir Benjamin Hall when he introduced his Bill for Reform in 1855.

The paving and lighting of the streets outside the City were in a chaotic condition. But a few quotations from his speech are worth recording.

The case of the Strand was exceedingly singular. There were in the whole of the Strand Union eleven miles of streets over which no less than seven different paving boards, each with its establishment of clerks, collectors, surveyors and other officers, had jurisdiction, and to show in what manner the officers were appointed, it was only necessary to observe that one of the surveyors was, when appointed, a tailor, and another a law stationer. The cost to the ratepayers for maintaining the official staff attached to these boards was £88 per mile. . . . Between No. 1 Strand and Temple Bar, a distance of 1,336 yards, or a little more than three-quarters of a mile, the street is divided into seven different paving boards.

Among further examples he took the parish of St. Pancras.

Its population has increased from 71,838 in 1841 to 170,000 at the present time (1855). There are sixteen paving boards; and a great portion of the parish was without paving and without any jurisdiction whatever. . . . There are 472 Commissioners, of whom 255 are self-elected. They have set up fourteen public pumps for the use of 170,000 inhabitants, of which one is returned as out of order. They have forty miles of road and sixty-three officers of various sorts to superintend, and these sixty-three officers receive no less than £4,000 a year in salaries, or £100 per mile. . . . These Commissioners have incurred a debt of about £140,000, or exactly £5,000 per mile, for which the ratepayers are liable, and of which liabilities they have little or no knowledge.

But the condition of the sewerage must have been worse than the roads. In 1847 it was in the hands of seven Commissions of Sewers, with 1065 members.

They had been almost wholly irresponsible to the ratepayers. . . . The Commissioners have attempted only one great work—the Victoria Sewer, the estimate of which was £28,854, and the cost, so far as can be ascertained, £41,472; but this, it is said, falls far short of the full amount.

Finally he gave a

summary of the management of the Metropolis. It had a population of 2,233,108; number of inhabited houses 291,240; rateable value of £9,011,230, exclusive of the City of London. The number of different local acts in force in the Metropolis was 250, independent of the general acts administered by no less than 300 different bodies; 137 of these had returned the number comprising these bodies, and they amounted to 4,738 persons. For the other boards there was not any return—there would not be less than 5,710 persons; so that from that computation the whole Metropolis was governed by no less than 10,448 Commissioners.

In the year preceding the Bill which was the occasion of this speech by Sir Benjamin Hall, was issued the report of the second Royal Commission (1854). The commissioners again recommended very drastic reform in the corporation and made the significant statement:

that no substantial or systematic reform of the Corporation of London has been accomplished either by the legislation of Parliament, or by measures of the Common Council since the presentation of the report of the Municipal Commissioners in 1837.

Unlike the 1837 report they did not advocate the unity of London. Instead they suggested that the seven parliamentary boroughs created by the Reform Bill of 1832 should be made municipalities, while the rest of the metropolis should be divided up in the same way; and to give some kind of unity they advised that:

In the event of such divisions being made, a Metropolitan Board of Works be created composed of members deputed to it from the Council of each Metropolitan Municipal Body, including the Common Council of the City.

The arguments put forward to justify this multiple system of government for a continuous urban area are, to our modern minds, very unconvincing. For instance:

All roads, streets, gas-pipes and water-pipes—in short, all means of superficial or subterraneous communication which run in continuous lines from north to south are necessarily stopped by the river.

In these days of tunnels and tubes, to put forward the Thames as an impassable barrier sounds curiously strange; but size and distance in 1855 were far more serious obstacles than they are to-day. It was long before the days of telephones, and even the old Metropolitan Railway had not been thought of. Means of communication were bad, and it was not surprising that the commissioners should be overwhelmed by the size of London.

Though the suggestion of seven new municipalities was not accepted, the lines of reform recommended by the commissioners were generally adopted in the Metropolis Local Management Bill, fathered by Sir Benjamin Hall in the speech already referred to. It seems to have aroused but little interest at the time, and the Bill became law after very meagre discussion in Parliament. Unsatisfactory and ineffectual as the Act proved in many ways, it was a great advance on the condition of London at the time. It set up the Metropolitan Board of Works which provided the new London with some central administration, and though charges of corruption finally brought about its downfall, it did some excellent work.

Under the Act, the twenty-three larger parishes became vestries, while the smaller parishes were grouped together into fourteen districts to be managed by district boards. These vestries and boards were the local government authorities for their respective areas, but for certain common purposes, the chief of which was main drainage, they sent delegates to this Metropolitan Board of Works, on which the City Corporation also had representation. Besides main drainage, the board was entrusted with the duty of making metropolitan improvements and regulating the building line.

But it is in main drainage that the board did its best work. Before 1855 practically the whole of the sewage was

discharged into the Thames, and polluted the river. The board deserves the gratitude of London for its inception of this fine system of drainage.

As I have said, the aim of the Act of 1855 was to govern London through the localities, and the vestry was to be the responsible body. The Metropolitan Board, consisting as it did merely of representatives from the vestries, was to be their servant, to do work on their behalf. This is shown by the provision that the board had to report annually to the vestries as to the work it had done.

But the unity of London proved too strong for this idea, and as new services were required they were invariably entrusted to the central authority. As it became necessary to have the purity of gas tested, this duty was given, not to the vestries, but to the Metropolitan Board. Another more striking instance is the fire brigade. Before 1865 some of the vestries maintained manual fire engines, but the localities were quite unable to deal with a really great fire. For their own protection the insurance companies had to organize a fire brigade of their own, with seventeen stations, while the safety of life was left to private effort: the Royal Society for the Protection of Life from Fire maintained eighty-five fire-escapes by voluntary subscriptions. Parliament therefore in 1865 gave the duty of providing a fire brigade, not to the vestries, but to the Metropolitan Board of Works.

The provision of open spaces was forced on the board by the vestries themselves: no locality was going to take the lead in providing parks, the use of which would be shared by the whole of London; they were constantly going to the board, asking it to acquire land for the purpose. And so, gradually, the Central Board came to be regarded as the park authority.

When it became imperative for London to be provided with better means of locomotion, it was inevitable that the board, and not the vestries, should be made the tramway authority; and though the vestries had the power of vetoing schemes—a power so freely exercised by them and their successors, the boroughs—this centralization has made some kind of tramway system possible for London.

But it was in housing that the common obligation of London was most clearly recognized. Following out the principle of making each district self-contained, Parliament could with reason have made the vestries, as the sanitary authorities, clear the slums they had allowed to grow up. But it was realized that these bad areas were largely caused by rich districts pulling down working-class dwellings to make room for shops and offices and more valuable property; the multitude had to live somewhere, and they were forced to crowd together in the poorer districts. Not only were the slums a common responsibility but a common danger, and so, in 1875, the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act put on the Metropolitan Board of Works the obligation to clear areas represented by the local medical officer as insanitary and unfit for human habitation.

Good work was done under the Act in clearing some of the most horrible slums; its administration disclosed to what depths of human misery people had been allowed to sink, while London was without any proper central government. Provision was made for the rehousing of all the people displaced on the cleared sites, but subsequent legislation reduced the obligation as to the numbers to be rehoused, and allowed the board more discretion as to sites where fresh housing was to be provided. Some sixteen schemes were carried through by the board at a net cost of £1,300,000, a large part of which could have

been saved if London had had a proper metropolitan health service.

The common needs of London had forced this mere drainage board, only indirectly elected, to be possessed of great powers. As the first recognition of London's unity it did great service; it showed the possibility of a centralized government, and paved the way for the County Council.

But through all this period a persistent body of reformers fought for something better, something more suited to a great town. The old City proved the chief difficulty, suspecting every proposal as likely to endanger her privileges, seeing in every reform a power that might overshadow her dignities. In 1863 a Bill was brought in to amalgamate the Metropolitan and City Police, and its sponsor, Sir George Grey, had to say:

Whenever I touched any question which affected the alleged rights and privileges of the City, a power of resistance was shown, which it is difficult to estimate too highly.

Sir George Grey spoke with knowledge and with reason. He had introduced several Bills on behalf of the Government for the internal reform of the Corporation. But Mr. Ayrton was the most persistent advocate of reform, and year after year, from 1860, he introduced some measure to give London a proper form of government. He found many successors; Bills were brought in by Mr. Mill in 1868, and by Mr. Buxton in 1869 and 1870, and in 1875 by Lord Elcho and Mr. Kay-Shuttleworth. They all aimed at the unity of government, and they all met the same fate. Lord Elcho, in a speech he made introducing his Bill, said:

The question of the Government of the City of London has been so often before the House, has been so freely canvassed by the Press and elsewhere, that it is only necessary for me to say that the object contemplated by the measure is to bring in our great Metro-

polis improved, harmonious, and economical government by establishing Unity of Administration. It is believed that this can be done by extending the City Corporation over the whole of London.

This Bill of Lord Elcho's received the enthusiastic support of *The Times* newspaper, and some extracts from a leading article dated 7 October, 1874, are worth quoting:

Our present sufferings, however unpleasant at the time, will not have been without their use if they give an impetus to the pending project for a Reform of the Municipal Government of London. The first condition of a complete remedy is the creation of a Municipality for the entire town, whose governing body shall contain men, both capable of conceiving great plans and sufficiently representative of all classes to be entrusted with the proper means of carrying them out. A reform of the Municipal Government of London has confessedly been so long needed, and it has been so long unperformed that we are glad at last to be assured that it will be taken vigorously in hand in the coming Parliamentary Session. . . . The Bill of which the draft is now being prepared will, of course, have for its first aim to get rid of the old evil of separate and conflicting municipal jurisdictions. This it will effect in the simplest manner possible, by extending the powers of the City Corporation over the whole Metropolitan area.

In 1874 the influence of the City was too strong, and though Lord Elcho's Bill was delayed till the next year and amended to meet the views of the Corporation, not all the force of the Conservative Party behind it, nor the great newspaper that backed it, could stand against the "ancient privileges."

Meanwhile the Metropolitan Board of Works was getting discredited; there were rumours of corruption, and the feeling was growing that it was not the kind of authority to trust with large powers. On this subject, too, *The Times* took a sound line, and a leading article, dated 12 December, 1874, is well worth quoting:

We have three governing bodies, the area of whose operations is coincident, or nearly coincident, with the extent of the Metropolis. . . . The Asylums Board pursues a career of comparative obscurity. . . . We

know a little, but not much, more of the Metropolitan Board of Works. Its members meet in Spring Gardens, and Sir J. M. Hogg is their chairman, but how the members are got together few can explain. It cannot be said that these Boards are of mystical antiquity. The Board of Works is not twenty years old, and the Asylums Board is barely out of a seven years' apprenticeship, so that both may be said to be the creation of yesterday. The School Board is, indeed, younger; but if we know more of its character and composition it is not because it is only four years old but because its mode of election is simple and intelligible, so that the representative connection between the Board and the inhabitants of the Metropolis is never overlooked. The first consequence of the review of the position of the three bodies to which we have referred must be a resolution to have nothing to do with Boards elected by the processes of double filtration, or partly so elected and partly nominated, processes resulting in the creation of authorities which are estranged from the people of the Metropolis and distrusted as they are estranged.

Threatened institutions live long and, in spite of the attack of the Thunderer, the Metropolitan Board of Works lived another fifteen years, and the Metropolitan Asylums Board was only absorbed by the County Council in 1930.

But these articles helped to rouse public opinion, and a League for Municipal Reform was formed under the able chairmanship of J. F. B. Firth, M.P., who became the leader of the movement. And though legislation could not be passed, Parliament showed sympathy for reform. Actually in 1878 the House of Commons passed the following resolutions:

(1) That the present state of local government is unsatisfactory, and calls for reform; (2) That the whole Metropolis should be united under one administrative authority directly representing the rate-payers, and so constituted as to command general confidence; (3) That these conditions are not fulfilled under the present system; (4) That the whole Metropolis should be remodelled so as to form a representative body of the Metropolis of this County; (5) That these reforms be undertaken by Her Majesty's Government without delay.

The agitation culminated in Sir William Harcourt's Bill of 1884. His scheme was simply to extend the boundaries of the City, and divide London into municipal districts,

which should elect the Common Council, which in its turn should elect the Lord Mayor. To quote his words:

The foundation of our plan is to adopt the Corporation of London as the basis of the Central Municipal Body, which is to administer its affairs.

The scheme arranged, in addition to the Central Council, for the establishment of District Councils, which, though they were to be elected by the localities, "were to possess no power except that which is conferred upon them by the Central Council," but the work they did was to be borne by a local rate. The Bill tried to reconcile the new Corporation with both the old City and the Metropolitan Board of Works by a provision that of the 240 members of the new council, only 159 were to be elected by the constituencies, the balance being made up by the retention of the whole of the 46 members of the Metropolitan Board, and 44 members to be elected by the old Common Council.

But in spite of the efforts to conciliate the City, the Corporation showed most determined opposition.

The Lord Mayor exercised his right to sit in the House, took part in the debates, and led the agitation against the Bill. Mr. Firth in the House of Commons (3 July, 1884) complained of the methods employed.

I have no right to complain that associations have been started against, and largely supported by, City subsidies; I have no reason to complain that the City have imported from the South of London and elsewhere numbers of people and paid them to create opposition at public meetings in support of the Bill. . . . I have no reason to complain that the City authorities have expended thousands of pounds of public money in placarding every hoarding in London, in advertising in every public newspaper. . . .

It was generally alleged at the time, and afterwards proved, that the Corporation used its funds to hire bullies to disturb meetings and create a hostile atmosphere against the Bill.

But in spite of these methods there was considerable enthusiasm for the Bill, and it was only the exigencies of parliamentary time that prevented its being persevered with. Next year the Government was defeated, and displaced by a Conservative Ministry, and London reform received another setback. But other circumstances were to force it to the front again. Grave charges were made against the honesty of the Metropolitan Board of Works, and they proved to be so serious that a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate them under the chairmanship of Lord Herschell. At least two leading officials and two members of the board were incriminated, and its methods of working were shown to be so unsatisfactory that no Government could leave the system untouched. The opportunity came when the local government of England came to be dealt with.

Mr. Ritchie was entrusted with the Bill. The City had proved so strong in withstanding reform that he decided to circumvent it, and instead of building on its foundations, to build round it. The City remained a county within a county. Mr. Ritchie succeeded where countless others had failed; he made the creation of the county councils of England an excuse for making London a county, and for the first time gave the metropolis a central governing body, elected by the people, with some semblance of civic life, and some form of unity. The machinery, imperfect as it is, has worked wonders, and made London, though still wanting much, instead of a byword and a reproach, a well-governed town.

As an existing institution the County Council is described in a subsequent chapter.

But the fight for reform was not ended. The vestries still remained, and the Corporation was left untouched.

Another royal commission was appointed, with Mr.

Courtney, afterwards Lord Courtney, in the chair. It issued its report in 1895.

The report was far from favourable to the system set up by the Local Government Act of 1888.

The machinery of local government [it said] applicable to a rural county and the boroughs lying within its area, was insufficient for the far more complicated case of London and the problems of its government were not solved by the Act of 1888.

The commissioners unhesitatingly recommended one central body with strong subordinate local bodies.

The government of London must be entrusted to one body exercising certain functions throughout all the areas covered by the name, and to a number of local bodies exercising certain other functions within the local areas that collectively make up London. The central body and the local bodies deriving their authority as representative bodies by direct election, and the functions assigned to each being determined so as to secure complete independence and responsibility to every part of the system . . . London is really a great town, and requires town and not county government.

They recommended:

. . . that the whole area of the present administrative County of London should in future be styled the City of London, and should be a County in itself; while the present City should be styled, and we shall hereinafter always so refer to it as, the "old City." The governing body of the City of London and its electors should be incorporated under the name of Mayor and Commonalty of the City of London, the designation hitherto borne by the old City, and this Corporation should succeed to the present Corporation of the old City and the London County Council.

The commissioners strongly advised ample duties being entrusted to the local authority:

. . . everything possible should be done to maintain the strength, authority, and dignity of the local bodies of London, and that, in the division of functions between the Corporation of London and the local authorities, the former should be relieved of all administrative details for which its intervention is not really necessary, and the latter should be entrusted with every duty they can conveniently discharge.

But they insisted upon the importance of centralized finance.

There should be one City or Borough Fund for London, and there should be a rate levied by the new corporation, to be called the City or Borough Rate.

The old City was to be in the position of an ordinary local authority.

Nothing came out of this report. The City became extremely nervous, and endeavoured to persuade Parliament, instead of setting up a new central authority, to divide London into a number of municipalities.

It was not until 1899 that Parliament again made a serious change in the constitution of London. In that year Mr. Balfour introduced the London Government Bill, which set up the borough councils. This amalgamated many of the old areas, and divided London, outside the City, into twenty-eight municipalities, each with its mayor, co-opted aldermen, and elected councillors. Westminster was given the name of City which it had long claimed, but it was in the same position as the other boroughs. The scheme left the City Corporation intact.

This Act set up authorities which, in some ways, regard themselves as rivals to the County Council. It was a step towards simplification, as the number of areas was reduced, and the work of government to some extent co-ordinated.

Mr. Balfour was responsible for another great change in London government. The old School Board set up after 1870 was to go the way of all other *ad hoc* education authorities throughout the country, and in 1903 its work was transferred to a statutory committee of the London County Council.

The twentieth century introduced a new problem in London government. Just as in the eighteenth century the City had been unable to contain its citizens within its

walls, so in this century they have spread outside the county boundary. This question of Greater London forms the subject matter of my concluding chapter. One other event in the modern history of London I must refer to. The Local Government Act of 1929 swept away the Poor Law Guardians, and transferred their work to the London County Council. The history of education, Poor Law, health, and many other subjects, will be traced in subsequent parts of this book. The struggle for change is still going on, and we may yet live to see London with a system of local government worthy of its greatness.

CHAPTER V

THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

THE London County Council has become such an institution that it is difficult to imagine London without it. But it is a very new institution compared with the hoary antiquity of the City Corporation, or Parliament on the other side of the river. At the time of writing it is a little more than forty years old. I think I am right in saying that only three members elected to the first Council survive, viz. Mr. W. H. Dickinson, now the Right Hon. Lord Dickinson, Mr. Lawson, now Lord Burnham, and the Right Hon. John Burns, though Sir Evan Spicer was one of the first aldermen. But none of these four gentlemen are now members of the Council, though they still take an active part in affairs.

The Council first came into being on 31 January, 1889, as a Provisional Council, and before the Metropolitan Board of Works passed out of existence, proceeded to elect its chairman, elect aldermen, constitute its committees, fix its hour of meeting and decide questions of policy. In fact such was the enthusiasm of the new Council that the committees proceeded to meet and master their new responsibilities while the old Board was still functioning. The old Board room proved too small and the Provisional Council obtained the Hall of the Common Council from the City Corporation for their sittings, until the enlargement of the Council Chamber. Lord Rosebery was the first chairman, Sir John Lubbock, the eminent banker, afterwards Lord Avebury, was elected vice-chairman, and Mr. Firth, M.P., deputy chairman. Mr. Firth was a very remarkable man; he

wrote an excellent book on London government, and had become the principal spokesman for Municipal Reform, which was then something very different from what those words signify to-day. So successful had he become as a popular orator that he had roused the hostility of a large number of vested interests, both in the City and elsewhere. Organized opposition appeared at most of his meetings, but this only helped to endear him to a popular London audience. In selecting him as deputy chairman, the Council signified its adherence to a forward policy. The Local Government Act empowered the Council to pay its deputy chairman, and though there was some difference of opinion, it was decided to attach a salary to the post, the idea being that in taking over a staff and organization from another body it was well to have one of its own members in full control. Mr. Firth did not live long to enjoy his new post. In addition to heavy work involved in establishing a new office, Mr. Firth was carrying on his duties as a Member of Parliament. No doubt exhausted by the strain of his responsibilities he rushed off to Switzerland to recuperate by climbing mountains, and died in September as he was ascending La Flegère. His two immediate successors, Mr. Haggis and Mr. Dickinson, were both paid, the latter holding office for four years. Then the salary was allowed to lapse; by that time the Council had acquired enough knowledge of its staff to leave the detailed administration to the "clerk."

In selecting a rising young politician with no previous experience of local government as its first chairman, the Council had done a bold thing, but it proved a great success. Lord Rosebery had already earned a reputation as a brilliant orator, but his administrative ability had yet to be proved. However, he took his new post seriously, attended almost

daily at the County Hall, rapidly mastering the details of administration. He made a masterly chairman, gave dignity and status to the position, and set a standard which has been of great value to the Council ever since. It is worth while, perhaps, quoting some of the speech he made, not when elected chairman by the Provisional Council, but when opening the first official meeting on 21 March, 1889.

I have heard it stated that in conversation we have been stigmatized as an assembly of "Rads," and "Cads," and "Fads." I don't think that even these categories exhaust us. Nor do I consider that our judges have been perfectly fair, or have been in a position to be perfectly fair. The Press is perched up in a gallery somewhere in the dome of that magnificent chamber that we occupy by the pleasure of the Common Council, and is absolutely unable to hear any portion of our proceedings. . . .

What we have gone in for is real hard work and abstinence from oratory. . . .

Let us go on in a spirit of mutual confidence, and mutual reliance. I believe that many of us have been surprised to find how little we disagree. To those of us who were doubtful in advance, the inquiries which we have set on foot can have afforded no subject of terror, because they are intended to ascertain the truth; and those who were sure of their cause can only be strengthened in their faith. Well, then, if we advance in this way hand in hand, with a daring caution feeling our way, but not afraid to move, seeking the truth, but not afraid to face the truth when we found it—if we proceed without prejudice and without affectation, animated by a single-minded desire to do our best for London, we may live to elevate even this stupendous city; and the population which will come hereafter, unbounded and unborn may look back with gratitude to this first Council endowed with powers which seem so great now and will seem then relatively so small—and recognize that in this cradle there lay a giant infant, the prophet and soul of a better dispensation that brought a new message of hope and prosperity to the people.

These were fine words and had the real ring of oratory, but Lord Rosebery could have hardly realized how true a prophet he would prove to be.

The Council was to expand its work in all directions on existing services—housing, tramways, parks—and carry out

duties never dreamt of by the old Board of Works, but it was also to take education over from the School Board and swallow all the duties of the boards of guardians and the Metropolitan Board of Works. The total sum raised by the Council for the General Rate for the whole county in its opening year was £1,617,351. The estimated amount to be raised by the General County Rate for the year ending March 1931 is £19,580,864. £6,500,000 of this is accounted for by education, and another £9,000,000 for services transferred from the Poor Law Guardians, but this still leaves £4,000,000 to compare with the comparatively modest £1,600,000 of 1889.

The new Council made up its mind to set up a high standard of financial probity. The Finance Committee had statutory authority for its position, and no estimate could be approved except it first had been submitted to them for consideration. But down till 1907, the Council went out of its way to select the chairman of its Finance Committee from ex-"Treasury" officials. Lord Lingen was the first, to be succeeded by Sir Francis Mowatt, Lord Welby, and Sir Algernon West, though the last-named never actually occupied the chair. Whatever may be said about policy no one has been able to justify criticism of the financial methods of the County Council.

The Council works through committees very much as any municipal corporation. These committees elect their chairmen, now invariably members of the predominant party, though in the early days of the Council politics had very little to do with their selection.

The advantage of following the party system is that the chairmen can co-operate in a common policy, but of course it does limit the choice and preclude the minority from a full share of responsibility. In the early days the Council

divided itself in two parties, appropriately calling themselves Progressives and Moderates respectively. The Progressives were predominantly Liberal in national politics, but for a number of years they included in their ranks men who were Conservative in imperial affairs, but yet not ashamed to dub themselves Progressive in London government. Right down to about 1907 the Progressives kept inside their organization a number of Socialists; in fact, men like Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Sidney Webb, and Mr. Sanders, all subsequently members of the Labour Government, were pleased to accept the Progressive Whip. In fact it was this unity and absence of sectional differences that enabled the Progressives to retain power for eighteen years. The Moderates under their original title never obtained a majority. They had to wait until 1907 before they achieved success, and then it was under the new and attractive title of Municipal Reformers that they came into power, and have continued there ever since. It was the growth of expenditure and the rise of the County Rate that caused the change over, but the charge of extravagance was never made good.

The peculiarity of London government is the dual system. The London County Council is neither a municipal corporation nor a county council in the generally accepted sense. The County Councils were created in 1888 by the Local Government Act of Mr. Ritchie, to deal with rural England. As explained elsewhere, it was only to circumvent the City Corporation that London government took County form.

There is no real analogy anywhere in the country to London's form of government. Like so many other things in this country it has grown as conditions altered; for this very reason its constitution does not conform to any particular principle. First the new Council took over in 1889 from the Metropolitan Board of Works all its powers and

duties, which had been added to year by year by Parliament since its inception in 1855, mainly as a drainage board.

This parentage accounts for several peculiarities that puzzle the local councillor from the provinces. When Birmingham or Manchester wish to borrow money, they have merely to obtain the approval of the appropriate Government department, generally the Ministry of Health. Not so London. Before 1869 the old Board of Works raised money by bonds, generally secured on the proceeds of the coal and wine duties, and guaranteed by the Treasury. These bonds were often raised at unfavourable rates. No general Act existed at the time empowering local authorities to issue stock, and it was in order to enable the Board to borrow on better terms that the Act of 1869 was passed. It imposed a limit of £89,500,000, which at the time was considered a big figure! This amount was exhausted by 1873, and as the Board required more money it had to apply to the Treasury for an extension of borrowing powers. The Treasury was shocked at the extent of the Board's expenditure; and in the correspondence that passed they endeavoured to lay down guiding principles, and they went on to say that:

... they would prefer an annual Act fixing the amount which might be raised within the year, inasmuch as that would reserve to Parliament the complete control desirable when extensive loan operations are in progress.

Every year, therefore, the London County Council presents its Bill stating its money requirements. This Bill can be made the subject of debate in the House of Commons, and from time to time opportunity is taken to raise on it London questions or criticise policy.

The Local Government Act of 1888 provided that the

number of county councillors was to be double the number of members elected by London for Parliament; and the same Act authorizes the election of aldermen, on condition that they do not exceed more than one-sixth of the whole number of councillors. The original Council consisted of 118 members and 19 aldermen, but as the result of the redistribution of seats under the Representation of the People Act of 1918, the number of elected members was increased to 124, and the number of aldermen to 20. The custom has grown up of allowing the various parties on the Council to nominate aldermen in proportion to their elected members.

This seems a large body, but so rapidly is the work of the Council expanding that it is difficult to man the committees. The Education Act of 1903 provided for the co-option of members on the Education Committee, and that has been done ever since the Council took over the work. But in recent years the Council has favoured the extension of the principle, and now members are also co-opted to the Mental Hospitals Committee, the Public Health Committee, and the Public Assistance Committee.

Besides, the Council is represented on a number of outside bodies, such as the Water Board, the Port of London Authority, the London Traffic Advisory Committee, and the London and Home Counties Electricity Authority. All these authorities do work vital to the interests of London, and much of which would be done in the provinces by the city corporation. The theory that governs the division of responsibilities between the County Council and the twenty-eight boroughs, is that the central authority does the work that could not be limited to small areas. Houses could be drained locally, but the sewage had to be taken outside. This compelled the creation of the Metropolitan

Board of Works, and explains why its successor, the London County Council, is the "main" drainage authority.

The Borough Council could be persuaded to make a street improvement of local interest, but it would naturally refuse to be responsible for and widen an important main thoroughfare used by traffic from all over London. The former, therefore, would be done by the Borough Council, the latter by the County Council, though it is very difficult to draw a dividing line. Sometimes it has meant that the improvement has had to wait for years, because responsibilities could not be fixed. Now a fresh complication has been added. The Road Fund provides the Ministry of Transport, a new post-war department, with large funds for street improvements. The result is that both the boroughs and the County Council postpone action in the hope that the Ministry may be persuaded to defray part of the cost. But that is only by the way!

The Borough Council is responsible for dealing with individual insanitary houses and small slum areas, the County Council with large slums; but here again there is no exact border-line. The fact that two authorities are concerned with housing should double activities, but I am afraid it often means that it falls between two stools.

I describe elsewhere the division of public health responsibilities.

Certain duties could by no means be localized, and these had to be completely centralized. Fire knows no border-line; flames leap across borough, and even county, boundaries. Hence the London County Council runs the London Fire Brigade.

The boroughs maintain, clean, and light the streets, but tramways exist to take people away from the borough where they live. And so the London County Council is the tram-

way authority, though it is only with the boroughs' express permission that tram lines can be constructed on their streets. What has happened more than once has been that two boroughs have favoured a construction of a particular tram line, but a borough in between has offered objection, so that the line could not be made.

The association of the central authority with theatres is interesting. The danger from fire was the first reason. Ever since the early eighteenth century the Crown has claimed the right by royal letters patent on the licence of the Lord Chamberlain to regulate stage plays in London. But the danger from fire in a theatre was a real one, and in 1878 the old Board of Works was made responsible for fire protection, was empowered to make regulations for the public safety for all new theatres, but in case of those under the Lord Chamberlain only with his consent. The old rights of the Crown over London theatres date from a period when London was a very different place from what it is to-day, and therefore the area of jurisdiction had to be defined. In 1843, an Act of Parliament limited the Lord Chamberlain's powers to the Cities of London and Westminster, the Boroughs of Finsbury and Marylebone, the Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, and Southwark. Outside these districts it was left in the hands of the justices to make rules and regulations for their good conduct, subject to the approval of the Home Secretary. The Local Government Act of 1888 transferred these powers to the London County Council. As London has grown considerably since 1843, a number of suburban theatres come under its jurisdiction.

The control of music halls had a curious origin. In these days when they have become part and parcel of the daily life of the people, it will come as news to many, that the powers under which they are controlled date from the

Disorderly Houses Act of 1751, which laid down that any house, room, garden, or other place kept for public dancing, music, or other public entertainment within twenty miles of London or Westminster, without an annual licence from the Middlesex Quarter Session, was to be deemed a disorderly house.

The work of licensing theatres and music halls is vested in the Theatres and Music Halls Committee. Counsel are heard on behalf of the applicants, and as far as possible judicial procedure is followed. The Council claims the right to revise any decision of the committee; applicants can also appeal against a decision of the committee to the whole Council. The activities of this committee have extended considerably since the opening of cinemas, which were brought under control by the Act of 1909, largely inspired to protect the public from the danger of fire, particularly because of the explosive character of the early form of film. The Council could not license them to open on Sunday on account of the Sunday Observance Act 1789, in fact they were careful not to give a seven days licence. The intelligent foreigner is often puzzled by the English Sunday, and even more so by the ingenuity exercised in avoiding restriction. Having solemnly decided that Sunday was to be made a day of rest, and that it should not be desecrated by cinemas, both proprietors of halls and the licensing authority seem to have co-operated to evade restriction. Charity has been made to cover a multitude of sins. In order to evade the regulation, the halls were let at high rents to charitable organizations, and the rents were so remunerative that Sundays were often more profitable than weekdays. For a long time the Council turned a blind eye to what was going on, while the public acquired the Sunday cinema habit. Then the position was regularized

by a characteristic compromise. First, labour was protected by a provision that no one must be employed more than six days a week; church-going was provided for by the condition that the hall must not be opened before 6 p.m.; an audited balance sheet had to be submitted to the Council of the receipts and expenditure; and finally, the national conscience was satisfied by the condition that a fixed percentage of the profits shall go to a charitable object approved by the Council. By this means every one was pleased. The English Sunday was preserved, the public had its Sunday entertainment, the proprietor had his overhead charges reduced by the extra day opening, and charities collect a considerable revenue.

But trouble came from an unexpected quarter. Some of the theatre proprietors resented the privileged position that the cinemas were in, and either wanted them to close on Sunday or the right given to produce stage plays on Sunday. A case was stated in the High Court in December 1930, when judgment was given declaring Sunday opening illegal. Immediately the common informer got to work and took proceedings against a number of cinema proprietors for breach of the law. Appeal has been lodged against the judgment in question; and as I write the future of Sunday opening is uncertain. It is a curious state of affairs.

The Council has for years been very strict in its fire regulations, and they have been severely criticized by the trade interests. But these restrictions have meant that, though hundreds of entertainments take place every evening, and thousands of children, in particular, frequent cinemas, there has been a complete absence of either fire or panic, which is more than can be said of many other towns.

The importance of public safety is never recognized until after the accident has happened. When regulations are

made, the interest affected cries out, and condemns them as grandmotherly and vexatious, though the very same persons will be the first to complain and place the responsibility on the constituted authority if anything does go wrong.

Nothing, therefore, has been more unpopular than the Building Acts. Any one who wants to build a house or put up a factory is brought up against the Council with its complicated by-laws and restrictions. It was not always so. In the Middle Ages the jerry-builder could do his wicked worst. And even the Tudors left him alone. It was left to the unpopular Stuarts to interfere with the right of the individual. James I, in characteristic flowery language, proclaimed in 1615 that

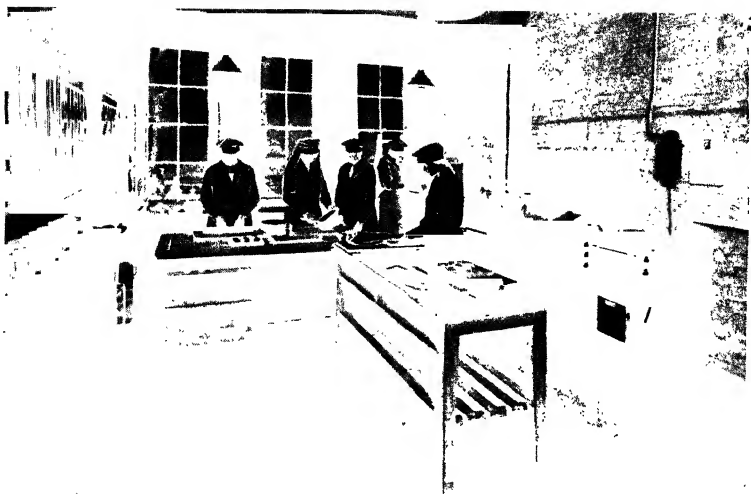
as it was said by the first Emperor of Rome that he had found the City of Rome of bricks, and left it of marble, so that Wee whom God hath honoured to be the first King of Great Britaine mought bee able to say in some proportion, that Wee had found Our citie and suburbs of London of stickes and left them of Bricke, being a materiall, farre more durable, safe from fire, beautifull and magnificent.

But very little was done before the Great Fire which swept away the half-timber picturesque houses of medieval London. The Act of 1667 required all buildings to be of brick or stone, laid down the number and height of stories, and thickness of walls, and for the first time authorized the City Corporation to appoint "one or two discreet and intelligent person or persons in the art of building to be surveyors or supervisors," from which gentlemen our present-day "district surveyors" can trace direct descent. But this control was confined to the area inside the city walls, and districts outside grew up at their own sweet will until in 1724 Marylebone, Paddington, Chelsea, and St. Pancras were brought under supervision. But London was

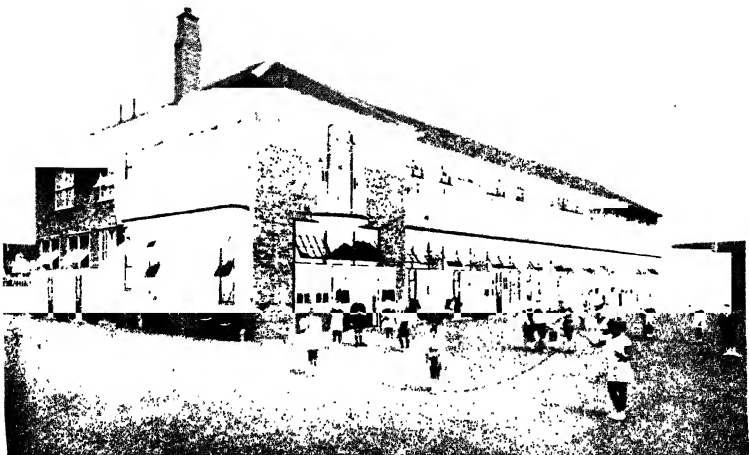
growing rapidly, and much of the bad houses and narrow streets of East and South London can be attributed to the absence of a building law.

The Metropolitan Building Act dates from 1855, the year the Board of Works came into being, and from that date on, a whole series of regulative Acts were passed. Rumour has it that London owes much of the Act of 1894 to the intervention of Queen Victoria, who was shocked at the skyline presented to Buckingham Palace by the huge, ungainly block of flats on the edge of St. James's Park. Be that as it may, London has been spared from the doubtful blessing of sky-scrapers. The Act of 1894 prohibited any new building of greater height than eighty feet, excluding certain features, without the special consent of the County Council. The same Act regulated the width of way of all new streets, and prohibited the advance of the building-line in existing streets without dispensation from the Council.

London was very behindhand in legislation for the town-planning of unbuilt-on areas. Continental and American cities were laying out their adjacent land on modern lines with broad streets and adequate provision for parks and open spaces, while new slums were growing up in our suburbs. It was not until John Burns's Housing and Town Planning Act that the principle was established. Experience shows that there are so many interests concerned, that powers to be effective must be drastic. The law has been strengthened, and is now to be found consolidated in the Town-Planning Act of 1925. Under this Act the Council has set up a special Town-Planning Committee which is attempting to secure the proper development of the little land still unbuilt on inside the county, and is co-operating with adjoining counties in the same direction.



London County Council
CLAPHAM TRADE SCHOOL (COOKERY)
See p. 88



London County Council

I have touched lightly on a few of the many interests that occupy the County Council. Education, Poor Law, Housing, Public Health, Traffic, Bridges, and the River Thames, I have dealt with in separate chapters, and it will be found that in each one of these problems the London County Council is playing a big part.

The extent of its functions can be best gathered by the size of its staff, for the headquarters staff consists of four thousand persons.

But perhaps an even better judgment can be found by a study of its annual budget. The estimated expenditure for the year ending March 1931 on maintenance comes to close on £29,000,000; if to that figure is added interest and sinking fund on debt, a grand total is arrived at of £31,250,000. These are big figures, and compare with the budget of a small European state. But it would be a mistake to run away with the idea that all this expenditure falls on the local rates. Many of these services are carried out to fulfil obligations placed on the Council by Parliament, and carry with them dual grants from the National Exchequer; e.g. the education expenditure comes to over £13,000,000; fees and grants from the Government towards the cost of special services reduce this by £450,000, and Exchequer grants amount to another £6,200,000. The actual amount falling on the rates for education comes to only £6,500,000. Most of the other grants from the National Exchequer have, under the Local Government Act of 1929, been stabilized and now are given in lump sum instead of being allotted to specified services. In London these general Exchequer grants total another £2,600,000. With these, and various deductions, the Council is left with a balance of £19,500,000 which it has to collect from the ratepayers.

One figure is included in this £19,500,000 that does not

appear in previous estimates of the Council, though it covers expenses that fell on the ratepayers' shoulders. It is described in the Council's estimates under the euphonious title of "Transferred" services, and amounts to £9,000,000. This is to cover the work handed over from the Poor Law Guardians to the County Council, and includes not only outdoor relief, but the cost of maintaining their hospitals and institutions. The care of the insane costs the ratepayers close on £2,000,000, after Government grants have been deducted.

£237,000 is found by the Council to make up the deficiency on the Council's large housing estate. This looks a modest figure compared with the other large items. If, as some of us hope, this housing expenditure results in improved health, and if the better environment has a good effect on the character and efficiency of the people, it may do something to reduce expenditure in other directions.

But add together Education, Poor Law, the Care of the Insane, and the £19,500,000 is reduced to the comparatively modest figure of £4,000,000.

It is always difficult to think in millions, and these figures do look alarming. But London is a large place, and the county population comes to close on four and a half million. Its assessable value, that is the amount on which the rates are levied, has now reached over £57,000,000, which is something like the income derived each year from the buildings and land inside the county boundary after the cost of repairs has been deducted. This figure has been going up steadily each year. As the population grows and London expands, the value of the property in the centre increases. It may be a poor consolation to the ratepayer, that as rents increase his assessment for rates increases

too. That is the weakness of the system. There are many methods of collecting revenue for local purposes. In France they have the "Octroi," a tax levied on goods as they come inside the city walls. In many German cities they have a local income tax. In England a man pays his share of the cost of government of the place where he lives by a tax imposed on the estimated annual value of the property he occupies, whether it be house, shop, or factory. This system has been open to criticism, and some attempts have been made to modify it. First the State makes contributions to certain services which are considered of a national character, such as education, and by that much the ratepayer is relieved. In the country, rates have been taken off agricultural land completely, because they were considered a burden on the farming industry. For the same reason, the Local Government Act, 1929, took off three-quarters of the rates from "industrial hereditaments," i.e. properties used as factories or workshops. But the occupier of a dwelling-house, or a shop or office, pays on the value of the property he has the use of, though he may be a poor man, and can ill afford to pay. There is a school of thought which would like to readjust the burden, which considers that the owner of the land should make a contribution and that part, if not all, of the local tax should be shifted on to his shoulders. There is nothing new in this. Something of the kind has been done in Australia and New Zealand cities, and resolutions in its favour have been passed on various occasions by the corporations of both Liverpool and Glasgow. Every great improvement increases the value of the land. A new bridge made at great expense at the cost of the ratepayers enormously adds to the values of the properties on each side of the river. The owners, as such, that gain so much from the improvement, should

contribute to the cost, instead of the burden being shifted to the occupiers of properties, who are made to pay heavy rents as well.

But this is controversial ground, and rather outside a general thesis on London government. With the expansion of public service discharged locally, the need for a reconsideration of the incidence of rating increases.

No chapter on the London County Council would be complete without some reference to debt, especially as the Council is the loan-sanctioning authority. In 1928, the total public debt of London reached no less a figure than £145,700,000. The City Corporation is responsible for £4,500,000, which amount is not secured on the rates. This brings down the debt secured on the rates to close on £141,500,000. The responsibility for borrowing must be divided up between four agencies:

First, the London County Council.

Secondly, the Poor Law Guardians, which the Council has now taken over.

Thirdly, the Borough Councils.

Fourthly, the Water Board.

Taking the London County Council first, £27,000,000 is invested in housing. This has been spent on land and bricks and mortar, and the development of the estates.

Another £8,750,000 is invested in the tramways, and security for this can be found in the permanent way, rolling stock, and power stations, which together provide as good a security as any railway assets.

Another £9,000,000 can be seen in school buildings, playgrounds, all which are tangible assets.

The greater part of the odd £25,500,000 can be found in various properties owned by the public, such as the County

Hall, the Kingsway improvement sites, all of which are realizable.

The Metropolitan Borough Councils are accountable for another £27,250,000, which include £9,500,000 invested in electricity (power stations and network); £10,500,000 in housing estates; £652,000 in baths and wash-houses.

The Guardians' debt of one and a half million pounds is more than covered by the properties they own in the way of hospitals, schools, and other investments.

The Water Board accounts for £42,000,000, but some of this went to the water companies who were able to show commercial assets.

The amounts I have mentioned are loans outstanding. Under regulations of the Treasury and the Ministry of Health, all expenditure on land and buildings must be paid off in sixty years; all outlay on plant and machinery, which covers tramways, must be wiped out inside of twenty-five years. Every year, therefore, local authorities are paying off debt. The assets are much larger than the figures given indicate. This is further elaborated later on when I deal with housing and tramway finance.

Most of the National Debt has disappeared in smoke; it has been incurred to cover the cost of war.

But local authorities, like London, can show realizable assets, mostly on land and buildings, which the investor in municipal loans can see with his own eyes.

London County Council stock stands high in the public estimation, and their loans can be floated on favourable terms, though, like all borrowers, London now has to pay post-war rates, which has added to the cost of the various services.

CHAPTER VI

THE BOROUGH COUNCILS

THE reader, exhausted by the study of the manifold duties of the London County Council, might well feel he had mastered the intricacies of London government. It is impossible to isolate the local authorities in London, they are so intimately interconnected with each other. But though the Borough Councils are an integral part of the system, their constitution must be studied separately.

Just as in Australia work is divided between Commonwealth Parliament and State Parliament, so in London local government it is distributed between the County Council and the Borough Councils, and the City Corporation, always remembering the special position of the City. Before 1 April, 1930, the position was further complicated by the existence of twenty-five separate boards of guardians, but the absorption of their duties by the London County Council simplifies matters to that extent.

Created in 1899, the areas of these twenty-eight new towns followed as closely as possible the lines of the old vestries.

Each of these boroughs is divided into wards which return from three to nine councillors according to size. They are elected for three years, and the statute provides for the election of aldermen. The mayor is elected annually. All the "pomp and circumstance" of civic dignity have been grafted on to these new municipalities: robes of office for mayor and aldermen, gilt chains, mace, and other paraphernalia. Town halls have been built in some boroughs

of considerable magnificence, and every effort has been *made to create a civic consciousness, with no little success.*

Their work covers a multitude of duties, some of which I have dealt with in the chapters on health and housing.

Primarily they are the "street" and local sanitary authorities; they construct and maintain the streets; their medical officers and sanitary inspectors are responsible for the health of the inhabitants; they provide local drainage; they dispose of dust and house refuse.

This last service is one of the most important of those discharged by the twenty-eight local councils. In the financial year 1925-6 no less a sum than £2,200,000 was spent, of which half went on refuse collection and disposal, and the balance on street cleaning. From time to time there has been considerable criticism of the way in which refuse has been disposed of in London. This is always a difficult matter in a large town, and all the more so in a place the size of London. As a result of a number of questions on the subject in Parliament, the Inspector of Public Cleansing in the Ministry of Health, Mr. Dawes, was instructed to inquire into the subject, and his report made some pungent criticisms of the London system.

First he insisted that:

The public cleansing service of London, regarded as a whole, is, in my opinion, seriously defective.

He then proceeded to say that the work of refuse collection and disposal presents unsatisfactory and insanitary features which are unworthy of the capital city, or of any city. And he added, there is an absence of uniformity in administration and in methods of operation and organization. Overlapping exists and is wasteful. Finally, he advised that the present system under which boroughs in effect contract out their responsibility for the hygienic disposal of house

refuse is definitely wrong and should not be allowed to continue.

This was a startling enough report, and it is not surprising that Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the then Minister of Health, lost no time in appointing a Departmental Committee, which reported in June 1930, when they stated that they were in general agreement with the conclusions of the inspector. And they added that:

London as a whole has not kept pace with the great advances which have been made in the science and practice of public cleansing, and the work of refuse collection and disposal by the Metropolitan Sanitary Authorities presents a great many unsatisfactory and insanitary features which should be remedied without delay.

The conclusions of the committee are remarkably interesting, and show the need of co-ordination in London government. The first recommendation is worth quoting in full:

That it is no longer practicable for the twenty-nine Sanitary Authorities [the City included] within the highly developed area of the administrative County of London, separately to dispose of their refuse efficiently, economically, and without causing a nuisance, and that the disposal of house, trade, and street refuse in London should be centralized, and placed under the control of one body.

The committee made twenty-nine other interesting suggestions, all of a constructive character, one of which I might mention here, which is that many of the existing refuse-disposal works in London should be closed down as soon as practicable, that there should be as few disposal-places as possible, and that any works should be on a large scale, constituted on well-planned lines, and on suitable sites. This recommendation is of special importance because of the serious complaint against refuse-dumps on the outskirts of London, especially one at Dagenham which has been shown to be the home of rats and other vermin, and a veritable breeding-place of flies. Whether anything will be done remains to be seen.

The obvious course is to put on the County Council as the central authority the responsibility of refuse disposal, while leaving to local councils the duty of collection as at present. The only alternative seems to be the creation of another *ad hoc* board, a thing always to be deprecated.

I have dealt at length with this subject, partly because of its immediate importance and partly because it is so typical of some of the difficulties London has to overcome.

In many other matters there is inevitably a considerable variation in standards between the various boroughs, partly no doubt due to the difference in the financial position. The Great West Road can be followed continuously from Hammersmith on the west to Whitechapel on the east, and goes through the areas of no less than eight road authorities—Hammersmith, Kensington, Paddington, Westminster, Marylebone, Holborn, City, and Stepney. The motorist cannot fail to notice the change in road surface, and in the method of street cleaning and lighting, as he passes from one borough to another.

Some boroughs have their own municipal electricity undertaking, while others have surrendered the right to companies. The subject of electricity I have dealt with elsewhere.

Some boroughs have embarked on considerable housing estates and slum clearances; others, though the needs are there, have done little in that direction.

Great progress has been made of recent years in the provision by the boroughs of public baths and libraries. Considerable stimulus has been given to the latter by the Carnegie Fund, which has always been ready to help poorer boroughs that have shown a willingness to provide adequate assistance from the rates. As for the public baths, the necessity for them in most of the older and poorer quarters is emphasized by the complete absence of bathrooms, not to

say hot-water circulating systems. People used to talk about the "great unwashed," but if it is remembered that every drop of water in many working-class homes had to be boiled in a kettle, it is surprising they were so clean.

One of the best things that have been done of recent years by the boroughs is the supply of central public baths and wash-houses, where for a nominal sum a good hot bath can be had. Some of the most enterprising boroughs, such as Camberwell and Bethnal Green, provide excellent Turkish baths, which men engaged in heavy manual labour find take out the aches and pains after a long week's work in the wet. Swimming baths have been opened almost everywhere. The Londoner takes to water like a duck to a pond. Many a fatal accident has been caused in canals by the undue enterprise of London boys. Now the average Cockney has learnt to swim. The schools include swimming as part of the curriculum, and it is having a very good effect on the physique of the rising generation. The London County Council makes arrangements with the borough councils for organized visits to the swimming baths. Incidentally, great use is made now of lakes and ponds, both in the royal parks and the London County Council open spaces. But it is these fine covered municipal baths that have done so much to make swimming a popular sport in London.

The gross expenditure of the twenty-eight boroughs came to £13,000,000 for the year ending March 1927, the latest date for which the complete figures are available. But this is a very different figure from what falls on the rates. £3,000,000 of it belongs to the municipally-owned electricity undertakings, which bring in a revenue of more than that amount and showed a profit of close on £100,000. Housing schemes are, of course, revenue forthcoming, and are

entitled to grants from the National Exchequer, and by that means the figure is reduced by another £347,000. By State grants for special services and by income derived from services for which charges are made, the total amount is reduced to £8,000,000. These figures are complicated enough to puzzle the most intelligent inquirer after information. But I am afraid I have not told the whole of the story. The burden of finding the money is not evenly distributed.

London, perhaps even more than in most cities, wealth tends to concentrate in certain parts of the town. Fashion has much to do with it, but naturally the well-to-do seek houses near Hyde Park and St. James's. Rents there are high, and as rates are levied on the basis of the annual value of the property, the boroughs which contain these fine mansions collect big revenue while only levying a small percentage in the pound. Westminster, Kensington, Paddington, and Chelsea are the fortunate boroughs which include most of this fine property. But they also include very few poor, who naturally gravitate to where rents are low.

The same applies to trade. The big banks, insurance offices, and the Stock Exchange are in the City, where, in consequence, land values are high, and where it does not require a high rate to be levied in order to bring in the necessary money for the public service. The City has long since shed its night population: they were driven out into the neighbouring districts of Bethnal Green, Whitechapel, and Shoreditch, or across the river to Southwark and Bermondsey.

The narrow streets of the City, where a century or two ago the people lived and plied their crafts, are now covered with highly rented warehouses and business premises. When the Government decided to carve twenty-eight

brand-new towns out of the metropolis they seem to have disregarded this very real difficulty.

Both wealth and population in London are so unevenly distributed that it is sometimes said to be divided into cities of the poor and cities of the rich. This is well illustrated at the triennial elections, when the local councillors are elected. Places like Chelsea and Westminster have the satisfaction of knowing that not a single Socialist has succeeded in being elected to the privilege of sitting in their council chambers; but the boroughs of Poplar and Bermondsey can respond that they are completely the other way, and that none but Labour members are elected to their town halls.

Poplar has been much in the public eye, and has been held up as the symbol of everything extravagant and wasteful. It had at the census in 1921 a population of 162,000, and an acreage of 2331 acres. Westminster, which is generally regarded as the epitome of civic virtue, had a population of 142,000, and an area of 2503 acres. In 1929 when a penny rate in the pound was levied in Poplar it brought in under £4000; in Westminster the same rate brought in £40,000. Though it is true that Westminster, being in the heart of the capital, naturally desires to show a high standard of street lighting and maintenance, yet it is not troubled with many difficulties that Poplar has to face. The congested condition in which people live in a place like Poplar entails an army of sanitary inspectors and health visitors, while, as there is often no place but the streets for the children to play in, a roadway has a peculiar significance which it quite lacks in the West End. Why, many a back street is used as much as a cricket pitch as for vehicular traffic, and if it is not kept well cleaned and lit, accidents are inevitable! When it comes to expenditure, Westminster is by no means the parsimonious place that our advocates of economy would lead



London County Council
 MONNOW ROAD CENTRAL SCHOOL. SINGING LESSON *See p. 88*



us to believe. In the year 1926-7 Poplar spent on its highways £106,000: Westminster £262,000; public lighting cost Poplar £17,600: Westminster paid for the same service £48,000. I do not wish to suggest that I am comparing like with like, but I want to show that if expenditure is the test, the poorer districts are not necessarily spendthrifts.

On the other hand, Poplar spent in the same year no less than £12,500 net on maternity and child welfare, against Westminster's £4400. That does not mean necessarily that Westminster is falling short of Poplar in benevolence. The latter has not the same problem to deal with.

The assessable value of Poplar in 1927 was a little over £1,000,000 sterling, which was high compared with some of its poor neighbours like Bethnal Green, where it was only £600,000. But in Westminster the assessable value in the same year came to over £9,000,000.

I have compared these two boroughs situated at opposite ends of the town to illustrate the problem with which London is faced. Parliament has recognized the difficulty. As I have explained in my chapter on the Poor Law, when each district had its own Poor Law Guardians, Parliament tried to adjust differences through the Common Poor Fund. In the same way, to ease the burden on the poorer boroughs an Act was passed in 1894 which provided for a levy of 6d. in the pound on the whole of London, the money being distributed on the basis of population and rateable value; the poor boroughs all received this money somewhat on the basis of their needs and the rich boroughs found the money. The Equalization Fund was done away with by the Local Government Act of 1929, the plea being that by the centralization of the Poor Law, and its transfer to the London County Council, the poor boroughs were being relieved of quite enough of their burdens.

But a new difficulty has arisen which, while still further complicating local finance, threatens some boroughs with a serious contraction of their source of revenue. The Local Government Act of 1929 provided that factories and workshops, or to use the technical phrase, "Industrial Hereditaments," were to be relieved of three-quarters of their liabilities for rates, i.e. they were to be derated. It was argued that industries as such received little direct benefit from the expenditure of the money raised by rates, while the rates were a charge on industry which added to the cost of production and handicapped industry.

It was recognized, however, if the industries were thus derated, the local councils would be deprived of revenue. The Government therefore undertook to make good the loss sustained, though the figures are arrived at by a complicated formula. But this is quite reasonable so long as services are stabilized, but if it is necessary to find money to meet the cost of new or expanding services, the area on which the rate is levied is contracted by the partial exemption of industrial property.

The trouble is that London municipal finance is far too complicated and involved.

The borough councils are the rate-collecting authorities: they have the unpleasant duty of sending out the demand note for expenditure for which they are only partially responsible.

First, the rate has to cover money spent by the London County Council; secondly, it has to bear its share of the Metropolitan Police, which is under a department of the State, the Home Office; thirdly, there is an amount to cover the invariable deficiency on London water-supply, which is under the Water Board, an authority elected by and serving a much larger area than London; and it is only

the balance that the local borough council is responsible for. The unfortunate ratepayer receives this nasty request for money: where it is gone and who has spent it, he is generally unable to follow, though the custom now is to print on the back of the demand note particulars of the various items of expenditure, showing how it is divided between the various authorities. The man who pays his rates direct by this means gets some opportunity of understanding how the money goes. But the great majority of householders do not pay their rates direct. The custom is to collect rates quarterly: most of the population live on weekly wages. Not only is it next to impossible for them to find the lump sum for quarterly payment, but it would be very expensive to gather in rates from thousands of small tenants. So the local council compounds with the owners of small property, who are allowed a percentage to cover the cost of collection, and they add the rates to the rent and collect them weekly. The result is that the ordinary working-class tenant has but the foggiest notion of how the money he has paid for rates, included as it is in his rent, has been spent.

Some great landlords, like the London County Council, do print on the back of their rent receipt some information as to how much is for rent and how much for rates, but that involves expense, and is the exception rather than the rule.

These problems do not exist in a great provincial city. There you have one great council that is responsible for all services; a local newspaper gives wide publicity to all expenditure, and there is a real civic consciousness. If the rates go up, the ratepayer knows that persons at the town hall are responsible, and he brings to account his municipal councillor.

In London it may be the County Council, it may be an increased expenditure on the police, it may be bad

management of the Water Board, or if it is his own local borough council, it may be because of the low assessable value of his own particular part of London.

I do not pretend in this chapter to have solved the riddle for the puzzled Londoner. I may even have confused him still further. But if I have made him realize what a complex affair London finance and government is I shall not have written in vain.

CHAPTER VII

LONDON'S EDUCATION

To understand the education system of England, and not less that of London, it is necessary to take into consideration three important factors:

(1) That it is a partnership between the national Government and the local authorities.

(2) That it is a dual system; the churches, principally the Church of England and the Roman Catholic, running their own schools on parallel lines with the local authorities' own schools, though they are now correlated.

(3) That there is a differentiation between elementary or primary education, and secondary or higher education, due to the legislation that brought the former into being.

It is less than a hundred years since the State first recognized that it had some concern in education, and then only in a perfunctory way. Before 1833 the chance of a poor man's children securing any kind of education depended on whether they were fortunate enough to live in the neighbourhood of a church that had the money or enterprise to institute schools, or which had inherited some endowment left by a pious benefactor.

At first the State's interest was limited to mere building grants, the character of the education being left entirely in the hands of two religious agencies, the National Society and the British and Foreign Schools Society. But in 1839 a special committee of the Privy Council was set up to

administer these grants. As the years went on, this committee developed a staff and organization of its own, and gradually, in the light of experience, the power of the purse was made a lever to secure some kind of educational efficiency. But the gaps were many, especially in the great towns where the churches were quite unable to keep pace with the rapidly growing population. And nowhere was this more so than in the slums of London. Besides, not only were there not enough school places, but many of the buildings were mere apologies for schools, and the teachers were often quite unqualified for their work. Many of the reports published in the seventies make startling reading in these days of lofty classrooms and certified teachers. One such official report, dated 1874, describes a London school as more like a

baby farm. Seventeen children in a small filthy hovel. There were four, in fact, a few months old. The little ones were quite naked. The woman who pretends to look after the school was engaged in a back yard, washing. From the woman down to the infant, all here seemed steeped in ignorance and wretchedness.

That was less than sixty years ago, and though that school no doubt was by no means typical, you have only to read the pages of Dickens to realize the condition of the child population of the metropolis. Several efforts were made in Parliament to improve things, but it was left to the Liberal Government of 1870 to lay the foundations of a national system of education, the chief credit going to Mr. Forster, who piloted the Bill through Parliament. The "Forster" Act, to give it its familiar title, had a special significance for London. The School Boards, which it created, gave the citizens of London the opportunity to elect an authority to do work for the whole of London. It was the first symbol of the common life of the metropolis. And very well did the London Board do its work. Section

74 of the Act left it to the discretion of each School Board to decide whether they should frame by-laws to enforce attendance. And it required no little courage, dependent as its members were on popular election, to decide as they did in favour of compulsion.

A School Board report describes the lives of some of the children in the Old Nichol Street area, to whom it was decided to apply compulsion to attend school. Their

lives were a constant round of sunless drudgery,—they never played as children play, they never seemed even to think. They were prematurely old, and the victims of an awful cruelty. They worked at match-box making many hours, and at other times assisted their parents in disposing of their wares in the street. The mortality amongst the young children was appalling.

The parents of these children, faced with the loss of these earnings, were not likely to welcome the new schools. The new board had a hard task to enforce attendance; it was not always easy to obtain a conviction from a magistrate, inured to the idea that a child's earning was a natural addition to a scanty family budget. But the board persisted, and the educated generation of to-day owes those pioneers a real debt of gratitude for their courage.

Nor was the other side of their task easy. Everything had to be improvised. An old Board School teacher, who taught in a building in the immediate neighbourhood of the area just mentioned, has described to me the pandemonium of the opening days. With no tradition to guide the lads, and with master and pupils complete strangers to one another, the teacher had to be more of a prize-fighter than a scholar, and be able to use his fists rather than chalk on a blackboard.

The board's first task was a census of the child population by a door-to-door visitation. This took some years, but they did not wait for it to be completed, and immediately obtained authority to build twenty schools.

If the board had had a clear field to work on, its task might have been easier. But it was only empowered to supplement the supply of elementary schools—to fill up the gaps. The denominational schools were scattered about the town, and attendance at them satisfied the requirements of the Act. And these Church schools were just as much under the ægis of the State as the Board schools; they received direct grants from the Education Department, though the local boards had no cognizance of them and gave no rate aid.

In those early days education was by no means free. It was not until 1891 that a special grant put the School Board in a position to abolish fees, though some of the Church schools actually continued to impose fees until as late as their transfer to the control of the London County Council.

In the thirty-four years of its existence the London School Board did great things. At one time the religious controversy threatened to undermine its popularity, but in the end common sense prevailed. The Act of 1870 permitted religious teaching in the schools, provided it was of purely undenominational character and limited to simple Bible teaching. The formula of the London School Board has been often held up as a model as to how this delicate matter should be handled, and is worth quoting:

The Bible shall be read, and there shall be given such explanation and such instruction therefrom in the principles of the Christian religion and of morality as suited to children, provided always that in such explanations and instructions the provisions of the Act of 1870 in sections 7 and 14 be strictly observed, both in letter and spirit, and that no attempt be made in any such schools to attach children to any particular denomination.

The School Board produced many capable administrators, but Lord Stanley of Alderley, afterwards Lord Sheffield, by general agreement was the dominant personality in policy and debate.

Two things made some change inevitable. First, while the Board schools were steadily progressing in the character of the building and the teaching provided, the voluntary or Church schools were languishing from want of funds. Either the latter had to be closed down or money found to bring them up to date. Secondly, the School Boards were strictly limited by statute to elementary education in the narrowest sense. Any attempt to go beyond these limits was immediately pounced upon by the Government auditor as illegal, whether it was in the form of an advanced course for senior pupils, or evening classes for children just left school. Ever since the Great Exhibition of 1851, Parliament had been giving grants to stimulate the study of art and science. A special department, the Science and Art, had been organized for this very purpose. The School Boards, the obvious organization to make use of this money, were excluded by these limitations from carrying out the work, or giving rate aid.

In 1889 local authorities were charged with the duty of organizing technical education, but whether it was to differentiate elementary education from the main current of educational advance, or to curb the growing pretensions of School Boards, this work was given to the new County Councils, and the London County Council with them.

But the School Boards had the buildings, and the London County Council, as with other authorities, could not, at any rate as regards evening continuation schools, work other than through the School Board. It is these two factors that explain the Act of 1902. Something had to be done, though there was considerable opposition to the abolition of the old boards after their good work, as well as to the placing of the Church schools, still under Church management, on the rates.

In 1904 the London County Council, on the appointed

day, not only took over the whole work of the London *School Board*, but became responsible for the teaching in all the denominational schools, as well as the authority for secondary, technical, and higher education.

Under the Act, known after its sponsor as the Balfour Act, the Church schools remain the property of their trustees, who maintain the buildings, but the payment of the teachers and cost of equipment become the responsibility of the education authorities as with their own schools. The former are known as Non-provided—the latter as Provided schools. The syllabus taught in the two sets of schools is the same, with the one exception of religious instruction, which in the Non-provided schools continues according to the terms of the trust deed, and retains its sectarian character.

To graft on to an already heavily loaded London County Council tree this complete new education branch was a big bit of work. In fact, it looked as if the Council would break down under the weight. Many of the members of the old board, who had given years of devoted service to their duties, were none too pleased to see other people doing the work which they were conscious of having done well. Nor was the Council too wise in its treatment of these members. To meet their claims the London County Council had power to co-opt educationists on its new committee, but in their desire to initiate a new era some of the ablest of the old members were passed over. Nor was the task of the new education authority made any easier by the religious controversy.

Many of the London County Council members looked with a far from friendly eye on the denominational schools. The local authority had no obligation to accept transfer of a Church school except it were fit for its present purpose. The question was whether the Council should deal tenderly with

the denominations, and give them time to bring their buildings up to date, or the law should be strictly interpreted and none but efficient schools accepted. It was this delicate issue that in my mind had much to do with the downfall of the Progressive party at the London County Council elections that followed the transfer of education.

Many clergy who had been devoted adherents to the Progressive cause so long as their main interests were health and housing, transferred their support on the education issue.

But to have absorbed the London School Board with the Church schools, and higher education thrown in, with such signal success, was a great triumph of organization. Much of the result can be attributed to the tact and skill of the first chairman of the newly constituted Education Committee—Sir William Collins, and the genius and organizing capacity of the first education officer—Sir Robert Blair.

An early issue was whether this new committee should meet in public, and it was argued that in order to relegate education to its position of an ordinary service of the Council, the practice of other committees should be followed and the public excluded from its discussions. However, wiser counsels prevailed, and the precedent set then has been followed by the new Public Assistance Committee in 1930. The real danger of concentrating such an immense amount of work in the hands of one elected body is that it will break down under the mass of detail involved. By admitting the Press to the committee deliberations it enabled the Council to devolve large powers. The Education Committee, except for the addition of one or two extra committees, such as the "Higher Education," work through the sub-committees inherited from the old School Boards. Perhaps the most important of these is the

Teaching Staff Sub-committee, which is *responsible for the engagement, promotion, and discipline of some 30,000 teachers.*

Some attempt has been made to decentralize work geographically, but to a very limited extent. London is divided into twelve districts, each with its local office and divisional officer, but their duties are mainly of a routine character, such as the enforcement of school attendance and the engagement of school cleaners. One duty they have of considerable importance: they act, either themselves or through their assistants, as clerks to the School Managers of the Council's own schools. These School Managers are provided for by statute, and must be attached to each school or group of schools. But here again complaint is made that though they may do useful work by personal interest, their actual duties are mainly of a routine character, and subject always to the confirmation of the Central Education Committee.

There is another factor that must be here noted that applies to the whole of English education. The London County Council is not the only authority for education; it is only a partner that finds half the money; the other half is found out of funds provided by Parliament, which are administrated by the Board of Education, which in 1899 had become a self-contained department with its president a member of the Cabinet. As education is now recognized as a national obligation, some such partnership was essential. But not unnaturally, as the State found half the money, the responsible minister claimed considerable say in the expenditure. The minister found himself from time to time involved in liabilities for which he had not made sufficient allowance in his estimates, while he was constantly faced with difficulties with the Treasury. Local authorities often led the

board up paths the end of which they could not see. Meanwhile a great body like the London County Council found it irksome to have to bargain with an outside authority engrossed in discussions with countless little education authorities throughout the country. A plan has now been conceived that seems to satisfy both partners in the transaction. Every three years the councils draw up a triennial programme, with an outside estimate which is discussed with the board and approved in principle, and within these limits considerable latitude is allowed.

For details of the Council's education organization the reader must be referred to the London County Council's excellent handbooks.

There is still a very clear-cut line between elementary and secondary education. Until recently the grouping of the elementary school followed the lines of an infants' department for children from five to seven, though in a poor district attendance from three to five is encouraged. In this department boys and girls are educated together, entirely, under women teachers. From seven years old the Council's policy, where the numbers permit it, is to divide the school into boys' and girls' departments, each under a separate headship; but the diminishing child population has led the Council in some areas to revert to the mixed school, though this is not favoured in principle. Under the Fisher Act of 1918 children must stay until they finish the term in which they reach the age of fourteen. And they were encouraged, though not with much success, to stay on until they reach their fifteenth birthday.

Before I deal with secondary education I must refer to one new factor that seems likely to eliminate the differentiation between it and elementary education.

Associated with the Board of Education is a Consultative

Committee composed of men and women experienced in all phases of education. This committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Hadow, was in 1924 asked by the board to report on what kind of organization and curriculum was suitable for children, other than those at secondary schools, up to the age of fifteen, regard being paid to their probable occupation, trade, or industry. The committee issued in 1926 a document known as the Hadow Report, which made definite recommendations which will ultimately modify the whole organization of elementary education. The report insisted on the age of eleven as a time in a child's life that marks adolescence, and recommended this as the right moment to transfer the child to a new school with a different atmosphere. From seven to eleven the child should be in a junior school, and from eleven to fourteen in a senior school, with the natural corollary, if the senior course is to be completed, the ultimate raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen—in fact, the committee definitely recommended 1932 as the year when this should be done.

At the time of writing an Education Bill is passing through Parliament, and there seems every prospect that in due course it will be placed on the Statute Book. This provides that after September 1932 parents will be required to keep their children at school until fifteen. In order to ease the strain on the family budget, provision is made for the payment of a maintenance allowance at the rate of five shillings a week for the child kept at school this extra year whose parents have less than a certain scale of income, e.g. payment is made to a man with one child if his weekly income from all sources does not exceed fifty shillings, and to a man with two dependent children whose income is not more than sixty shillings, and so on.

Every available opportunity has been taken to group

schools, so as to enable the senior children to be brought together under one roof. The report makes another interesting suggestion which seems to indicate that the old dividing line between secondary and elementary will soon fade away. They advise that when the time for transfer to a senior school is reached, a decision should be arrived at as to whether the child's aptitude is literary and clerical, or mechanical and handicraft. In the former case the child would go to a school which for the want of a better name is described as a "grammar" school; in the latter, to a school to be designated "modern." Already in the new senior schools children are being classified very much on this basis.

But whether this classification is definitely decided on, it is clear that once the age is raised to fifteen and reorganization is completed on the basis of a change of school at eleven, it will be impossible to differentiate between a senior school and a central or secondary school. (Especially as the age of entry to a Council secondary school has for some time been accepted as eleven plus.) Education will come to be regarded as one service.

In the meantime the real difference is there, especially in the size of class. And, I may add, in the cost. Elementary education costs £15 per child average attendance, compared with £39 per head in the secondary school (though against this it is only right to place the fees paid by a proportion of the pupils).

In spite of the higher cost per child for secondary education it is interesting to note that no less than sixty-three per cent of the Council's education expenditure goes to elementary education, against eleven per cent for secondary and university education, eleven per cent for technical education, and day and evening continuation schools, the balance being divided about equally between so-called "Special Services"

and "Cost of Administration." The heavy charge for this last item has been often adversely commented on, but rents in a place like London work out very high, and education administration has to bear its share of the costly County Hall.

Special services cover a rapidly developing side of education. Though not education strictly interpreted, they have become of recent years an integral part of the school organization. Contact with the child revealed to teachers how many who came to school were unable, by reason of health, or lack of nourishment, to take full advantage of the instruction offered.

The Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, enabled local authorities to organize school meals where the necessity arose. Dire consequences were anticipated at first from these powers, and for some time the London County Council hesitated to take advantage of them. Now the provision of meals is part of the school organization, and experience shows that it is subject to very little abuse. In fact, the number of meals served is comparatively small, the principal use made of these powers being more in the supply of milk to delicate or ailing children under the advice of the school doctor, who was brought into being under an Act passed by the Liberal Government in the following year.

The medical inspection of school children was undertaken without any question by the London County Council. But whether or not the ailments revealed should be treated by the authority became a matter of acute controversy between the parties on the Council for some years. However, once medical inspection was instituted it became inevitable, sooner or later, to follow up the cases by remedies.

The children by law must now all be inspected, first on entry to the school, then on reaching the age of eight, again when they are twelve, and finally on leaving school. If any

defect is detected, the case is followed up again. The doctors are assisted by a highly organized staff of school nurses and dentists, while bad cases are sent to treatment centres, run in co-operation where possible with the hospitals. In the year 1930 nearly 300,000 cases were treated.

But experience has taught the Council that many diseases can be dealt with by sunlight and air. Classes have been organized in school playgrounds, and where possible in parks and open spaces, and in special cases, open-air residential, seaside, or camp schools. Much of the success of this side of the Council work is due to the services of the members of the School Care Committees, who are a devoted band of unpaid workers appointed by the Council to each school for this and other kindred purposes.

Space forbids a description of all the multitudinous duties that come under the category of special services; but it covers schools specially designed for the blind, the deaf, and the physically defective, the care for whom is by no means one of the least claims of the Education Committee to the gratitude of the community.

A new responsibility is put on the shoulders of the Education Committee by the transfer to them by the Council of all the old Poor Law schools and children's homes which came into their possession on 1 April, 1930, when under the Local Government Act of 1929 the boards of guardians were absorbed by the London County Council. The committee has taken over the care of more than seven thousand children spread over some twenty-three residential schools, children's homes, and a training ship, the *Exmouth*; besides becoming responsible for a number of children boarded out with foster-parents or in certified schools not managed by the Council.

With the schools the Council took over 233 teachers,

and some 2000 persons employed in administrative and *domestic work*.

The schools before their transfer having been under a number of different authorities, there is great variety both in method and standard of management. The Education Committee aims at absorbing these schools into their general system, and bring them as much as possible into contact with ordinary schools, and to remove from the children the feeling that they belong to a different order of society. One paragraph from a report of the committee is worth quoting:

One of the greatest difficulties in teaching the children must be their very narrow background of experience. Their lives have been so confined that their knowledge of everyday affairs is, in some respects, extremely limited. For this reason the children in residential schools might be frequently taken beyond the confines of the school. We shall consider sympathetically any scheme for making more educational visits possible.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education in England, and not less in London, presents certain peculiar features that must puzzle the intelligent foreigner. Like our constitution, it has grown and does not answer to the rules of logic.

Up till 1904 post-primary or secondary education was quite outside the scope of the constituted education authorities, the elected School Boards. But when the London County Council took over the responsibility for education, it by no means found a virgin soil to exploit. On the contrary, as in the rest of the country, many old grammar schools and ancient foundations had for centuries provided for the education of the middle class, and by scholarships had made some, though inefficient, provision for cleverer

boys. Such schools as St. Paul's, Dulwich College, and Merchant Taylors' have a world-wide reputation, and are still self-supporting with their endowments and the fees of their pupils. But they by no means exhaust the list. There are scattered about London a number of smaller, less known schools that either have ancient endowments or have been under the patronage of a City company. With the higher standard of building requirements and improved salary scales, the twentieth century found many of these schools in financial difficulties. The County Council either took these over, or, more generally, gave them an annual grant in return for a number of free places, subject always to their conforming to a proper educational standard. But as far as the general population was concerned, the shortage of provision for secondary education was appalling. I am not sure that the leeway lost in the race for trade towards the end of the nineteenth century cannot be attributed to this gap in our education system: because, compared with Germany, a generation of business men grew up ill-qualified with commercial training and knowledge of foreign languages. It is this shortage that the Council's Education Committee had to make good. There now are some twenty-seven secondary schools built by and under the direct management of the London County Council, in addition to the fifty "aided" schools run under a trust deed, but substantially helped out of the rates.

It is only fair, however, to add that many of the children of the well-to-do go either to private venture schools or to the old public schools, not necessarily in London, but such places as Eton, Harrow, and Rugby, where they board, and where high fees are charged. But even if all these are totalled up, the deficiency in secondary education is considerable.

There is one factor, however, that cannot be ignored if proper judgment is to be arrived at, and this is the development of the central school. The need for something of this kind was realized by the old School Board, and an attempt was made to organize some kind of endowed instruction for brighter boys and girls in the elementary schools. But when in 1900 the decision of the district auditor was confirmed in the High Court, that the School Board must confine itself strictly to elementary education, all this effort was held up.

It was not, therefore, until 1910 that the higher grade or central school became part of London's education organization. The word "central" rightly describes the character of the school. The London elementary schools are formed into groups which feed a centre. At eleven the children sit for an examination, and the cleverest amongst them win scholarships or free places at the secondary schools according to the accommodation available. From the rest are picked the most intelligent, who are sent to the central school, where they are expected to stay until sixteen, where they learn at least one foreign language, and where they receive commercial and technical instruction according to their bias. These schools have been a great success, and have earned a well-deserved recognition, especially among commercial houses who are looking for efficient junior clerks. They provide for some 20,000 children spread over about sixty schools.

The central school must be distinguished from the trade school, which specializes in a particular craft or industry. The very size of London makes such specialization possible. Examples of this kind of training are the School of Building at Brixton, the School of Printing in Fleet Street, the Shoreditch Technical Institute, which is largely a school

of the furniture trades, and the Cordwainers' College, where the art of boot and shoe making is studied. But when all these are added together there is still a shortage for the child from fourteen to eighteen. It is not the quality of the secondary education provided that is faulty, but its quantity. Its infinite variety is its strength, and it is safe to say that nowhere in the world can a parent have greater choice of school.

One essentially London institution must be mentioned here. During the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century, when secondary education was held up by the limiting character of the Act of 1870, Quintin Hogg conceived the "polytechnic." Though in character a technical school, this provided classes for every kind of student, in every section of society, of almost every age. His own particular institute is housed in Regent Street, and now receives substantial grants from the London County Council.

There are eight other similar institutions, and altogether they receive each year through the London County Council over £300,000, in addition to building grants from time to time as need arises.

The polytechnics are part of technical education, but most of them run art classes, and cover a wide field of education.

If the intelligent seeker of instruction wants art education he will have to find his way through a complete labyrinth of schools and colleges. Right at the top stand the Royal Academy Schools, but they can hardly claim the same status as the Beaux Arts in Paris. The Academy exists under a royal charter, and is in essence a society of exhibitors who run a school of art instruction. In close rivalry with them are the Royal College of Art, first opened at Somerset House as long ago as 1837, and now in its own building at South Kensington; and the Slade School, which is part of London

University, and housed in the same building at the university. The former is a Government institution and under direct control of the Board of Education.

All of these institutions are self-contained art schools, and their authority varies with the popularity or the personality of some particular professor. Of course they are by no means purely London institutions, but draw their students from all parts of the world. Though the County Council gives scholarships available at any of these schools, it provides its own art education.

The Chelsea, the Westminster, the Camberwell, and the Hammersmith Schools of Art all stand high in reputation, and turn out men and women whose paintings and drawings have won considerable reputation, but some of the art classes at the polytechnics achieve very good results.

Superimposed on this structure is the Central School of Arts and Crafts, which now aims at providing advanced courses for students who desire to specialize in the applied arts—pottery, weaving, bookbinding, silver and metal work, wood engraving, poster work. But though it provides a kind of post-graduate course, it cannot yet be claimed to have superiority over the other schools, many of which retain their students until their training is complete.

No chapter on education would be complete without some reference to London University. Up till the Act of 1898 the University of London had been only a university in name, its work being limited to examination. Colleges existed, but only at isolated institutions. During the last thirty years a constitution has been worked out, until to-day it can be said to be a living organization. The London County Council can claim a large share of the result. They have endowed some twenty-one professorial chairs in subjects as wide apart as zoology and commerce; they give

about £40,000 a year in the way of grants to the university, another £50,000 a year to its constituent colleges, large grants from time to time to meet their need for new buildings, and now have become responsible for no less a sum than £400,000 towards the cost of the new university building, to be built in Bloomsbury, probably the largest grant of the kind ever made by a municipality to meet the cultural needs of its citizens. London soon promises to be a great university town.

Following the precedent of its other forms of education, the university schools and colleges have grown up sporadically, almost by chance as the circumstance demanded. Its principal academic schools are University College, Gower Street, and King's College, in the Strand, which are more or less run on normal university lines; but there are a number of recognized schools of the university with their own governing bodies that are purely specialist in character, two notable examples of which are the London School of Economics and the School of Oriental Languages. No reference to London University would be complete without mention of the twenty medical schools attached to the voluntary hospitals, which account for the great reputation attached to the London medical degree. These hospitals, some of which rose out of the ashes of the old monasteries, as such names as St. Bartholomew's indicate, are scattered about the town according to the needs of the population. The edifice is now to be completed by the Hammersmith Poor Law Hospital, transferred to the Council under the Local Government Act of 1929, being made into a post-graduate school, not only for London but for medical men and women from the whole empire. But it will be under the special ægis of London, quartered as it will be in a London institution.

Such then is London education, *differing in nothing fundamental from the education in the rest of the country*, except that because of its size it is able to offer greater variety of choice.

PART TIME EDUCATION

But for all the chances offered, the vast majority of the children leave school at fourteen never to enter again any place of education, and many of them by the time they reach eighteen have almost forgotten how to write. The old School Board made a gallant attempt to remedy this. As long ago as 1882 they instituted evening continuation schools, and they were recognized and assisted by the Science and Art Department of the Board of Education. But here again the School Board came up against the limiting character of the statute from which it drew its powers. And indeed the ingenious Government auditor, Mr. Cockerton, claimed that even such classes were outside the board's province, and could not be a charge on the rates. It was only by two enabling Acts that they were able to carry on until the transfer of education to the County Council.

Not one of the least advantages of the transfer of elementary education from the School Board to the London County Council was the increased facilities it offered for evening education. The new authority was able to place at the disposal of the people of London who desired to continue their education after they left school or college, all the buildings and equipment of the elementary schools. Occupied from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. in teaching children from five to fourteen, at 7 p.m. they became evening institutes,

where young persons come of their own free will to acquire learning. And the buildings of the trade schools and polytechnics are made available for the same purpose. If the boys or girls when they leave school pass straight on to the evening school, they are not required to pay any fees, and provided they put in the minimum number of hours, they can continue attendance free of charge for the following year. But even if an interval elapses before they join up, the fees are almost nominal and not enough to deter any young person from attending. But truth to say, in spite of the good done in these evening institutes, and the excellent results achieved, only a fraction of those eligible join up on leaving school.

Every year some 60,000 children pass out of the London elementary schools as they reach the age of fourteen; but out of these it is calculated that not more than about fifty per cent find their way into any place of education.

Reasons for these poor numbers are obvious. The child when he leaves school enjoys the freedom from restraint, and is not anxious to put himself under the schoolmaster again. He is conscious of his adolescence and wishes to assert his independence. Secondly, young persons when they first leave school readily find employment, and not unnaturally feel disinclined after a long day's work to sit at a desk and concentrate. Every effort is made to make the evening school attractive, and included in the syllabus are dancing, physical exercise, and handicraft classes; but it is a school, and learning must necessarily be part of the curriculum; it is not surprising that a lad of a little over fourteen, after a day on an office stool, does not avail himself of the opportunity offered.

Mr. Fisher, the author of the Education Act of 1918, was conscious of this defect, and a clause authorized education

authorities to organize compulsory day continuation schools for young persons between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, in the time of their employers. There was nothing new in the idea. Germany had experimented on these lines before 1914, and since the war compulsory day continuation schools have become almost universal throughout the Reich. In 1921 the London County Council decided to take advantage of these powers. It is never easy to start an experiment of this kind on a large scale. Buildings have to be improvised, teachers collected, most of them necessarily with no previous experience of a similar kind: it is something of a leap in the dark. On the appointed day, however, the new schools opened their doors and the children filed in. Opposition of course there was. Most of the employers were not too glad to lose their juniors eight hours each week. Nor did the parents show much enthusiasm. Discipline at first was difficult to enforce. New schools suffered from lack of tradition, and it takes time to create it. But within a few months everything was working smoothly, and the advantage began to be apparent. Every effort was made to suit the syllabus to the occupation of the child. But two hostile forces made for their destruction. First, their initiation synchronized with a serious trade depression, that not only made for a call for economy but made jobs hard to find. The difficulty in finding work was at once laid at the feet of the continuation school. Secondly, London was almost the only authority to take advantage of these powers. The adjacent authorities did nothing, with the result that a boy or girl working in London, but living outside, did not have to go to a day continuation school. Some employers gave preference to applicants for jobs exempt by their residence from school attendance. This helped to fan the discontent. And so, though no one

questioned the value, of their work and their growing efficiency, the schools were closed down after only a year's experiment. Some dozen of them survive as voluntary continuation schools. The Government departments and a few of the great business houses still send their juniors during the hours of employment. A new phase of day continuation schools, however, has developed that offers considerable possibilities.

A young person when he reaches the age of sixteen becomes a compulsory contributor to the Unemployment Insurance Fund, and after twenty-three weeks' contributions is entitled to draw benefit; but receipt of benefit can be made conditional on attendance at a day continuation school. There has been no obligation on the Government to provide the facilities; and partly because of division of responsibilities between two Government departments—the Board of Education and the Ministry of Labour—and partly because of fluctuation in the numbers and the difficulty of improvising staff as the number expands, progress in the experiment has been slow. But the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1930 does make an effort to remedy this defect, and in a clause for which I can claim part parentage, the Ministry of Labour has placed on it an obligation to see such centres are available where required. Where the young persons have to travel a distance fares can be paid, which enables the education authority to concentrate in one centre the unemployed scattered over a considerable area.

The policy of the London County Council has been to endeavour to co-ordinate this work with the voluntary day continuation school, though as the age and character of the pupils are essentially different, and the syllabuses of work have nothing in common, it amounts to little more than

making use of the services of the headmaster and carrying on under the same roof.

The lessons given are varied, and aim at suiting the occupations of the young persons, but special emphasis is placed on physical drill and handicraft. Of course one of the difficulties of the teacher in charge is that the personnel of his pupils is constantly changing, because as a lad is placed in a job he automatically passes out of the school. But any one who has seen one of these unemployment training schools at work cannot but be impressed by their utility. If it does not do anything else, it prevents that rapid moral and physical deterioration that idleness brings with it. But it promises to do more. Many young persons spend the first two years of their industrial life in unskilled employments, e.g. as van or errand boys, which are merely blind-alley occupations. At sixteen they can offer no skill or knowledge beyond the child at fourteen fresh from school. Lads take with avidity to handwork of all kinds, and especially when, as at the Bethnal Green centre, they are encouraged to make up their own material into something of use for their own home. With the transfer of the Poor Law to the London County Council these unemployment centres present great possibilities, and the Council is fully alive to the necessity of co-ordinating its education system with the training of not only juniors, but men and women who cannot find employment, often because of the vicissitudes of fashion or the substitution of some new machine for handicraft.

There is another institute that I must refer to before I close the chapter. Many a man who has not entered a place of learning from the time he leaves school, when he reaches manhood becomes conscious of some deficiency to be made good. Not unnaturally he is reluctant to enter

any building with the school atmosphere, or where he has to associate with young persons who are still adolescent, while his education is too defective to enable him to join a college or polytechnic. To meet this need, in 1920 the Council started half a dozen evening experimental men's institutes, for men not younger than eighteen, with a syllabus on the broadest possible basis.

The one most familiar to me started in the building of an ordinary elementary school in a purely working-class district. On the appointed day the head found himself with empty classrooms, and literally no one to fill them. He had to go out and search the streets for students, and received at first little sympathy from the neighbourhood. But he followed the policy of suiting the class to the student, instead of expecting the seeker of knowledge to adapt himself to the class. Many of the men of the district kept dogs or ponies, and a veterinary class met with immediate success. Others went in for backyard poultry, and a poultry class directed by the editor of a poultry paper has been so effective that it has won for the borough a pre-eminence in urban areas for its birds and their laying capacity. But incidentally it also gives useful lessons in elementary hygiene.

To-day this institute has a building of its own, with some 2000 members studying every conceivable subject, ranging from art and music to the internal combustion engine and Esperanto. Each section has its own committee and secretary, elected by the members of the class, who form a society responsible for their good conduct and maintenance of the minimum attendance required by the London County Council regulations. The whole presents an educational commonwealth which itself offers a lesson in self-government of the highest order. Of course much of its success must be

attributed to the genius of the director. But any person familiar with the neighbourhood will bear witness of its great cultural influence, while many a man down and out has been helped to regain his industrial efficiency and rejoin the ranks of industry.

With this experiment I must close my chapter on education. It may be argued that I have given too much space to this one subject in a book that is really an analysis of London government. But not only does education absorb such a large proportion of the total expenditure, but the successful working of a system of local government depends on the intelligence and education of the electors who select the persons charged with the duty of working it.

In the year 1904-5 the London County Council spent a little over four and a quarter million pounds on education, of which two and three-quarter million pounds fell on the rates. The estimated expenditure on education for the year 1930-1 was thirteen and a quarter million pounds, of which over six and a half million pounds falls on the rates, the greater part of the balance being found by the Board of Education from moneys provided by Parliament, on the basis of fifty per cent partnership.

To these large figures will have to be added next year a further £645,000 to cover residential schools and children's homes taken over by the London County Council from the Poor Law Guardians, and now placed under the responsibility of the Education Committee; £43,000 of this is for the training ship *Exmouth*.

These figures speak for themselves, and are the best justification for the length of this chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

To understand English Poor Law it is always necessary to hark back to 1601 and the statute of Elizabeth.

The English Reformation brought with it many consequences, but not the least of them was the break-up of the only machinery that existed for the care of the poor. The closing down of the monasteries and convents, and confiscation of the property of the Church, deprived not only vagrants and mendicants of the help they had been accustomed to, but robbed the labourers of their only friends in case of need. But there were other causes at work disturbing the existing order. Feudalism had its faults, but it did bring with it the responsibility of the lord for the well-being of his dependants. The Wars of the Roses shook this system to its very foundation. Besides, Tudor times saw great alterations in methods of land cultivation, such as the change-over in many places from arable to pasturage. The Parliament of Elizabeth had to apply itself to what was a new social and economic order—in fact, the Act of 1601 was the culmination of a number of attempts to meet the situation. It established the principle that the poor were no longer to be dependent on the Church or promiscuous charity, but fixed the responsibility on the parish where they lived. Provision was made for the appointment of “overseers of the poor,” an office that has survived right down to our times. But the real novelty in the Act is to be

found in the duty placed on these overseers to raise funds by the taxation of every inhabitant of the parish, in which the ratepayers can trace the origin of that unpleasant thing, the demand note. The moneys then raised were to be used to set to work children whose parents were unable to keep them, as well as persons who had no means to maintain themselves or no trade to get their living by, as well as to relieve "the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such others among them being poor and not able to work." The Act also extended the mutual liability of parents to maintain their children, to the grandfathers and grandmothers.

So long as England remained mainly an agricultural country the Act of Elizabeth more or less functioned, but with the advent of the industrial age and the introduction of machinery its lack of elasticity made some sort of change inevitable. But the general principles underlying the Acts of Elizabeth remained, and in fact the spirit of them still lingers on even in the law as it is to-day.

The Act of 1834 for the "Amendment and better administration of the Laws relating to the Poor" was founded on the recommendations of the commission of inquiry that reported that year, set up three Poor Law commissioners which were empowered "to declare so many parishes to be united for the administration of the laws for the relief of the poor," enabled them to authorize the appointment of paid officers for the administration of the relief of the poor, and "to prescribe the duties, regulate the salaries and determine their continuance in office."

But the main purpose of the Act was to discourage out-relief, and make public assistance conditional on entry into the workhouse, which was to be made the real test of destitution.

In spite of the ultimate unpopularity of the workhouse system and the general discredit that in latter years became associated with it, the framers of the measure and the commissioners that put it into operation were inspired with great belief in the efficacy of their policy and the social good it was likely to achieve. The Act contained no less than one hundred and ten clauses, and covered the whole problem of the relief of the poor. Though it was subject to amendment and considerable modification, the scheme in its essentials survived for close on a hundred years, except that in 1871 the functions of the commissioners were transferred to the Local Government Board.

One of the special features of the Act was the provision for the union of parishes. Curiously enough, when it became necessary to reconsider the whole problem afresh it was found in turn that these unions were too small. And this was particularly so in the case of London, where wealth was most unevenly distributed between the various parts of the metropolis. In fact, in 1867 legislation was passed setting up a Common Poor Fund under the ægis of the old Local Government Board. Through this fund the poorer unions were relieved of a great part of the cost of their indoor "paupers."

The basis of fivepence per day was allowed for each inmate, and the amount spread over the various unions according to their rateable value. By this means the rich unions, with few poor, helped those unions where most of the poor were located.

To make this historical outline complete, reference must be made here to the Metropolitan Asylums Board, which, in spite of its somewhat anomalous method of selection, proved quite an efficient body. Fifty-five of its members were nominees of the various boards of guardians, while

eighteen were appointed by the Local Government Board. Originally instituted in 1867 to provide hospital accommodation for serious infectious diseases on behalf of the various unions, it was found convenient to extend its functions to cover such duties as providing convalescent homes for Poor Law children, a training ship, the *Exmouth*, for training boys anxious to go to sea; finally, at the instigation of Mr. John Burns, it took over the casual wards. To have a number of different casual wards with varying standards of comfort for tramps to select from, in one continuous urban area like London, was too much for the common sense of Mr. Burns. One other piece of legislation should be mentioned here which was regarded as a novelty at the time, and from which much was expected. This was the Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905, generally credited to Mr. Walter Long, though it actually became law after he had ceased to be President of the Local Government Board. Under this Act a Distress Committee was set up in each of the London boroughs whose duty it was to register the unemployed, and find employment for them in works of public utility; it also made provision for a Central Unemployed Body, on which the London County Council and all the boroughs were to be represented. The function of this central body was to supplement the efforts of the constituent authorities, and, in addition, to make experiments in training, particularly in the direction of the organization of farm colonies, with a view of training town men either for work on the land or for emigration. Nothing much came out of the Act except the Hollesley Bay Farm Colony, that still survives and has turned out a valuable experiment.

The Royal Commission on the Poor Law appointed in 1905, and which reported four years later, gave special attention to the problem of London.

London Unions [they pointed out], as separate and distinct organizations, have not been able to adapt themselves to the needs of the Metropolis, and the legislation of the last half-century for the improvement of poor relief in London, is based on the recognition of this fact. The characteristic of almost every statute effecting changes in London has been in the direction of throwing fresh charges upon a common fund. The variations of rateable value, as compared with needs and population, make it very difficult to establish a common standard of treatment without an equalization of expenditure. An examination into the policy, practice, scale of relief, and cost of institutions, shows a wide divergence between the different Unions and sometimes between Unions immediately adjacent to one another. . . . An inquiry into the amount of public interest shown in the elections or in the subsequent policy of the Guardians, gives little hope that outside pressure is likely to revive such interest so long as the present system prevails. The first reform necessary in our judgment is the total abolition of the present Board of Guardians and the establishment of a Unified London for all purposes of Public Assistance.

Threatened institutions live long! Though generally the principles underlying these recommendations were accepted by all three political parties, the thirty separate London boards of guardians with their thirty offices and separate standards of relief (though by the time of their transfer to the London County Council in 1930 their numbers had been reduced to twenty-five) survived another twenty years.

The Minority Report of the Royal Commission of 1905-9 had recommended the complete break-up of the Poor Law, but though the Poor Law Guardians continued, the legislation of the pre-war Liberal Government was imperceptibly undermining their position. Health Insurance provided by the contributions of all workers, supplemented by the employers and the State, built up a fund which was to a great extent to make them independent of the guardians in case of sickness. If conditions had not become abnormal as a result of the war, Unemployment Insurance would have taken out of the Poor Law the ordinary unemployed workman: it set up machinery under entirely different auspices,

and quite independent of the guardians. The Ministry of Reconstruction shortly before the Armistice had appointed an influential committee under the chairmanship of Sir Donald Maclean, M.P., to consider the co-ordination of Public Assistance, and they pointed out that as the result of recent legislation what an immense amount of overlapping had come about, e.g. "Infants and Maternity" were dealt with by no less than five agencies: the Board of Guardians, the Local Health Authority, the Insurance Committee, the Local War Pensions Committee, and the Local Education Committee.

They recommended the abolition of the guardians, pointing out that they were

faced by overlapping functions and areas and by conflicting principles of administration. The resulting confusion has been aggravated by the growing popular prejudice against the Poor Law, a prejudice which owes less than justice to the devoted work of the Guardians and the continuous improvement in poor-law administration, especially in respect of the children and the sick.

In the case of London the function of the guardians

should be divided between the County Council and the Borough Councils in accordance with a scheme to be framed by the County Council after consultation with the Borough Councils.

Under this scheme the borough councils were to administer all assistance in money or kind, given in the home of the recipient, and to select persons for institutional treatment or training, but the institutions were to be run by the County Council, who were also to take over "Institutions appropriated for the sick" and "schools for the normally healthy children," but these last were to be transferred to the Education Committee. The expenses of outdoor relief under this scheme were to be charged to the local rates, but where the London County Council were satisfied that

(a) an adequate and suitable staff is appointed; and (b) the administration is conducted efficiently, economically and on approved principles, the County Council should repay to the Borough Council two-thirds of the expenses properly incurred within an approved estimate.

These proposals met with considerable favour at the time, in fact were approved by most of the authorities concerned, but they never matured.

Meanwhile big events happened that threw everything out of gear. The first year or two after the war saw an inevitable trade boom, which any one with any prescience could see would not last. In 1921 the bubble burst. In a short time the number of unemployed, that had been comparatively small, had jumped up to one and a half million persons. The Poor Law Guardians could never have stood the strain.

Fortunately, before the war, the then Liberal Government had devised the machinery of Unemployed Insurance for a few selected trades. It was now possible, therefore, to extend the system to cover all industries except agriculture and domestic service. If something of the kind had not been thought of, it would have been quite impossible to have dealt with the situation. Unemployment was mainly concentrated in certain areas, and these localities would have had to bear the whole weight of maintaining their unemployment. Even with the relief afforded by insurance the rates in many districts went up to over twenty shillings in the pound. It was the same in London. The rich boroughs, like Westminster and Kensington, and the City Corporation, were practically immune from unemployment; but Poplar, Bermondsey, and Bethnal Green had to face intolerable burdens, unemployment becoming so chronic that a great proportion of the unemployed had exhausted their claims to insurance benefit, even though benefits had

been extended by Act of Parliament to meet the abnormal situation.

Outdoor relief was a local charge, and though other Poor Law services, at any rate to the extent of the recognized scale, were chargeable to the Common Poor Fund, the cost of which was shared by the whole of London, assistance in the home had to be met out of local rates. If entry to an institution had been insisted on as a condition of relief, the workhouses could not have accommodated the numbers that were now seeking help.

The rates soared up until they reached an alarming figure. In Poplar the local councillors decided on drastic action. They found a useful weapon all ready at their hand. Money required by the London County Council for central purposes is collected locally by each borough council: the Poplar Council refused to levy a precept for this purpose, on the ground that the rates without it, were already more than the people could bear. Brought before the High Court for their failure to comply with the law, they were in due course sent to prison for contempt of court, and there they seemed likely to remain. This action brought matters to a head. Sir Alfred Mond, afterwards Lord Melchett, was the Minister of Health. At his instigation a hasty conference of London local authorities was summoned, and, curiously enough on the initiative of Westminster, the Minister was advised to make out-relief a charge on the Common Poor Fund. A Bill known as the Local Authorities Financial Provisions Act was improvised and rushed through all its stages, becoming law in November 1921. Besides making out-relief a common charge, it raised the contribution from the Common Poor Fund for persons in Poor Law institutions from fivepence to fifteenpence per day.

This was not the end of the Poplar controversy. The

local guardians were in constant conflict with the Ministry of Health both as to the scale of outdoor relief and their method of administration.

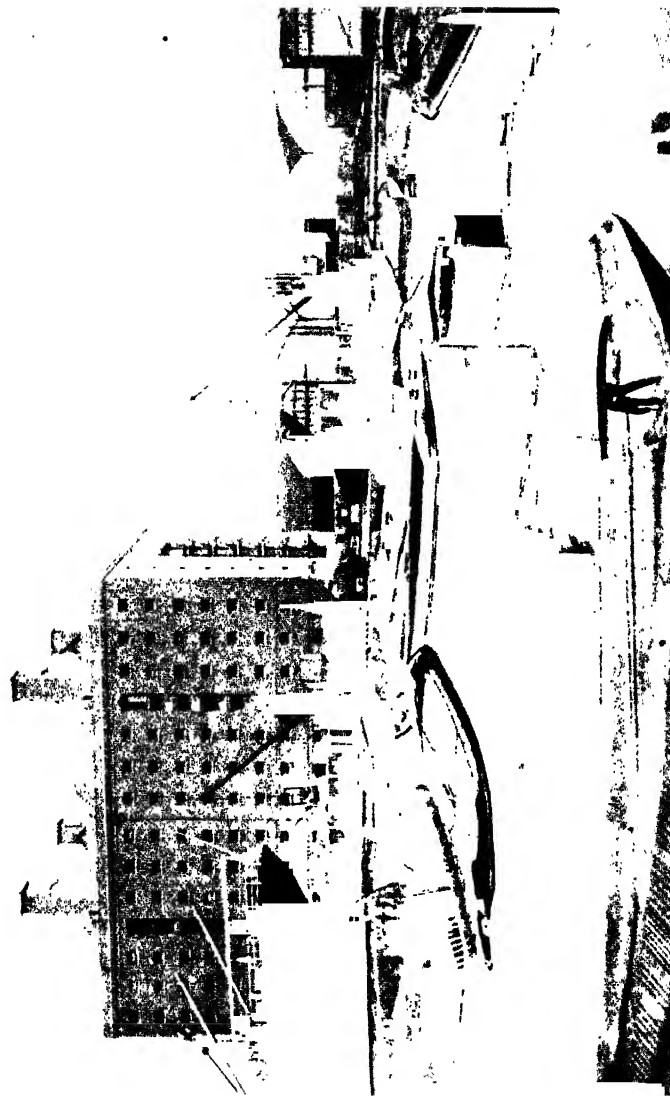
In 1926, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the Minister of Health, introduced his Board of Guardians (Default) Bill, which enabled the Minister to supersede any board by his own nominees where it appeared to him they had failed to discharge their duties; a power, however, that was never exercised nearer London than West Ham, which is outside the county boundary.

Another Act of direct concern to London was furthered by the same Minister. This was the Local Authorities (Emergency Provisions) Act of 1928, which required all London Poor Law Guardians to submit their estimates for all expenditure chargeable to the Common Poor Fund to the Metropolitan Asylums Board, who were empowered to disallow any expenditure they considered excessive. This machinery was intended to act as a check on the extravagant unions. In fact, with many of the London unions the Ministry of Health had been in open conflict. The Ministry's inspectors had been investigating cases of relief and criticizing methods. This kind of thing could not go on indefinitely. Some great change in Poor Law became inevitable. In December of 1925 the Minister of Health circulated to local authorities proposals to abolish all boards of guardians, and in the case of London to transfer their functions to the London County Council. The scheme was the subject of long discussion and negotiation between the Minister and both the County Council and the borough councils. The sympathy of the County Council in the early days of discussion moved very much in the direction of delegation of the administration of outdoor relief to the borough councils. There was a natural and proper desire to prevent

over-centralization, and a feeling that the County Council was likely to be overburdened by all this extra detailed work. But the negotiations broke down on the question of finance. If the Council was to pay the piper it would have to call the tune. The borough councils, as directly elected bodies, quite properly could not accept interference with their discretion in the administration of public assistance. All parties were agreed that outdoor relief must be a common charge on London as a whole, with the natural corollary that it must be a charge on the county as opposed to the local rate. There was nothing left to the Council but to accept the inevitable, and become responsible, however reluctantly, for Public Assistance.

That part of the Local Government Act, 1929, that concerned London had the backing of all political parties, and went through Parliament almost without a division.

How momentous was the responsibility that the London County Council was asked to assume is best illustrated by some significant figures. At the time of the passing of the Act there were twenty-five elected London boards of guardians, who were responsible for some one hundred and forty institutions which comprised not only workhouses but hospitals and a number of large schools. In addition, the Metropolitan Asylums Board was responsible for another sixty institutions of varying character, such as fever, tuberculosis, mental, and children's hospitals, a training ship, and, since 1912, the casual wards. Together these buildings provided accommodation for more than 100,000 persons. The expenditure of the transferred services came to about £11,000,000. But on 1 April, 1930, the County Council, that twenty-five years before had swallowed successfully the London School Board, digested the whole of this gigantic work without turning a hair. It speaks wonders for the



Courtesy of P.L.A.

MILLWALL DOCK

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skill and administrative ability of its staff. I am satisfied there will be a gain in efficiency, and that there may be some economy, but how much the change-over will mean a loss in human sympathy and an increase in bureaucracy only time will show. The vast majority of the Poor Law Guardians consisted of most devoted public servants who, with very little kudos and no hope of reward, had given hours of personal service in the interest of the poor, the sick, the old, and the pauper child. But if their duties were to become a common charge of the whole town and the cost of them equitably distributed over all its citizens, some change had to be made. The original proposals had favoured an increase in the numbers of the Council, but that was turned down in favour of co-option on the appropriate committee. The Local Government Act gave London very wide powers to divide up the transferred services amongst its existing committees, and the approved scheme does this. The schools have gone to the Education Committee, the hospitals to the Public Health Committee, the mental hospitals to the Mental Hospitals Committee, the transferred staff to the Establishment Committee. But the Act did not contemplate the complete elimination of the Poor Law.

Special provision in the Act is made for the setting up by the authorities to whom the work of the guardians is transferred of a new "Public Assistance" Committee, though in the case of London it is left to the Council to decide what the particular functions of this committee are to be. Whether it will expand or contract will depend largely on the policy and strength of character of its first chairman. Those who desire the break-up of the old Poor Law and all it stands for, will try to confine the new committee to the function of co-ordination, with the gradual

delegation of its work to other committees, so that in a very few years there will be very few traces left of the Poor Law of 1834.

Under the scheme of the Council approved by the Ministry, the Public Assistance Committee consists of forty-eight persons, of whom thirty-two are members of the Council and the remainder are co-opted from outside. This committee is responsible to the Council for all transferred functions not specifically referred to other committees of the Council. Most of the actual administration is delegated by the Public Assistance Committee to ten local area committees for the districts into which London has been divided. Each of these "local committees" in turn delegates the detail work of relief to district sub-committees, drawn partly from members of the local committee and partly from persons selected from a panel of persons approved by the Council. These sub-committees have to interview applicants for relief, and work in direct touch with, and on the advice of, the relieving officers. In fact, to these very subordinate committees falls the work that requires the greatest tact and discretion. The Council definitely decided to select the personnel of its committees on purely party lines, i.e. each of the three parties on the Council appoints members to the main committee, the local committee, and the various sub-committees, in proportion to their representation on the Council. Being still in its early stages it is difficult to pass judgment on the working of the new machinery. Up to the present no scale of relief has been fixed, but the guiding line has been the general circumstances of the family. The best that can be said of it is that there has not been any general complaint either of inhumanity on the one hand, or extravagance on the other.

The main functions of the Central Public Assistance

Committee are to "exercise control over the expenditure of the local committees"; to arrange for the care and maintenance of all persons requiring relief in institutions (excluding children under the age of five years who are separated from their parents, and children over the age of three in schools); to arrange for the provision of domiciliary *medical* relief; to set to work able-bodied persons who are granted outdoor relief; to keep all necessary co-ordinative records in regard to persons who have received public assistance through any committee or sub-committee of the Council.

The services transferred to the Education and Public Health Committees will best be dealt with in their appropriate chapters.

Many Poor Law reformers would have liked to have seen a different attack on the problem of the able-bodied unemployed. Already there exists great national machinery working through the Labour Exchanges and the Unemployed Insurance Act under the Ministry of Labour. To have another parallel organization under the local authorities seems wasteful. Often the same person receives help at the same time from both systems; at other times he goes backwards and forwards between the Labour Exchange and the Public Assistance Committee according to the state of his insurance card. It is all very antiquated and cumbersome. Science and intelligence will have to be applied to unemployment if the modern state is to master it. In the meantime the County Council will have this advantage over its predecessors that it will have at its back all the other great services of the Council, which, with good will, it should be able to utilize for works of public utility in times of depression.

With the passage of the Local Government Act the

London Central Unemployed Body disappeared, but it had long ceased to function except for its responsibility for the Hollesley Bay Colony. In many ways this colony has proved a useful experiment, and the Council has decided to retain it in the hope that it may provide a valuable training centre, especially for men suitable for emigration. Perhaps it is in the direction of training that the London County Council, in its dual capacity as Public Assistance Authority and Education Authority, presents the greatest promise as an agency to fight the problem of poverty.

CHAPTER IX

HEALTH

No branch of the public service has made more progress than health and sanitation. Health cannot be isolated from housing and education because they are intimately interconnected, and this chapter must be read together with those on the other two subjects. But the first attempts at any kind of civic government invariably take the form of a health service. Nearly all disease finds its origin in dirt, an aphorism I am prepared to justify. Or I might say, civilization is synonymous with sanitation.

The plagues that in the Middle Ages scoured out towns were due to the absence of sanitation. The earliest attempt at a Health Act dates from 1388, and describes how .

. . . dung and filth of the garbage and entrails as well as beasts killed as of corruptions are cast and put in ditches, rivers and other waters . . . [so that] the air is greatly corrupt and infect and many maladies and other intolerable diseases do daily happen. . . .

Just before James I acceded to the throne about a fifth of the population of London had been carried off by plague. The streets were narrow, the houses mostly built of wood, and there was an almost complete absence of drainage of any kind. So general was the sickness that it was not considered safe to summon Parliament for nine months after the coronation. To their credit the Stuarts made a real attempt to improve London, and a series of ordinances and Acts of Parliament were passed during the first half of the seventeenth century. But the Great Fire of 1666 came as a

blessing in disguise, burning up not only the houses but the garbage and muck of centuries.

The Act of 1667, made necessary by the Great Fire, set up the Commissioners of Sewers of the City of London, though outside the City walls, as I have pointed out elsewhere, sanitation was left to the chance activity of the parish. Drainage, as we now know it, only dates from the nineteenth century.

In 1843 the Poor Law Commissioners found the state of London sewerage so bad that they went out of their way to call attention to the need of remedial legislation. Most of the local sewers discharged direct into the Thames, and at low tide the mud was evil-smelling and dangerous to health. It was this state of affairs that largely accounted for the creation of the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1855. The housing conditions might escape the attention of Members of Parliament, but they could not be oblivious to the evidence of their senses; Parliament is situated on the bank of the Thames, and the odours from its evil-smelling waters reached the sacred precincts of the Chamber itself. And so is history made.

The board initiated the system of main drainage that is one of the wonders of the world. Great underground rivers were constructed that took the sewage down outside London, in the north to Barking, and in the south to Crossness. But these districts were rapidly becoming built over, and complaints became general from the neighbourhood at the pollution of the river, so much so that in 1882 a Royal Commission was appointed. The gist of the report, issued two years later, was that sewage should not be discharged into the river in its crude state. Out of the report has grown the elaborate plant and machinery at Barking and Crossness. At both of these places sewage is treated, the effluent dis-

charging into the river, the sludge being taken down the river by the Council's steamers and deposited into the sea. The London County Council is responsible for the main sewers, but the borough councils for the local sewers, which total a mileage of well over 2,000 miles in the County of London alone.

The Thames is a natural watershed, and as time went on it became necessary for London to take into its main sewers the drainage of a number of districts outside, who make payment to the London rates for the services rendered. The system has by no means reached perfection. Experiments are always being made, and new sewers constructed, but London has every reason to feel proud of its drainage system which, more than anything else, can claim credit for its comparatively low death-rate.

Public health services naturally divide themselves into preventive and curative.

Most of the actual health administration is carried out by the twenty-eight borough councils, and in the City by the Corporation. The general principle has been accepted that the County Council is the by-law-making authority, but the law is enforced on the spot by the local councils. The Public Health Act of 1891 provides that the City Corporation and the boroughs must each appoint a competent medical officer, half of whose salary must be found by the County Council, which must be supplied each year with a full report of his activities. The medical officers of health are assisted by sanitary inspectors, half the cost of whom the London County Council also pays for.

The central authority's business is to satisfy itself that an adequate and efficient staff is available in each district. The duties of the borough medical officer and his staff are multitudinous and varied. It is they who see that the food

in the shops is sound and unadulterated; on them is placed the responsibility to see that houses are fit for habitation, and where defects are discovered, to serve notices on the landlords to put them right. In the small borough of Bethnal Green alone no less than 28,000 sanitary defects were found by the sanitary inspectors in one year.

But of recent years new developments have rather overshadowed this most important routine work. It is not too much to say that between them the county medical officer and his twenty-nine borough and City medical colleagues shadow the Londoner from his birth to his grave. Before a child puts in an appearance on this earth the borough medical officer is getting ready for his arrival. The Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1918 is responsible for this early activity; it enables borough councils to make what arrangements they think fit, subject always to the approval of the Ministry of Health, for attending to the health of expectant mothers, and children under five years of age.

Most of the boroughs have opened up maternity and child welfare centres, or subsidize ones provided by voluntary agencies. Mothers and children are visited in their homes by health visitors, while part-time lady doctors give advice on both mothers' and children's health. In the borough with which I am most familiar there is a special clinic for delicate children, there is an orthopædic clinic, and artificial sunlight therapy is given to babies with considerable success. Grants of milk are made to necessitous and nursing mothers and their babies.

No longer is the working woman in the most critical moment of her life left to the tender mercy of some gaunt female, often unqualified and dirty, with nothing to recommend her but the smallness of her fee. Many boroughs now provide their own midwifery service. It was not until 1902,



London County Council

ROBHAMPTON ESTATE HUNTINGFIELD ROAD

See p. 135



London County Council

COLLINGWOOD ESTATE. HARVEY HOUSE

when the Midwives Act was passed, that there was any control of midwives. The London County Council is the supervising authority for London. In order to co-ordinate practice, a further Act, passed in 1918, repealed the power of the Council to delegate these duties to the localities. There was a real danger of a midwife disqualified in one borough walking across the street and practising in the next. The Council keeps a register of all practising midwives, supervises their work, and aids their training.

There is, as usual in London with its dual system of government, a certain amount of overlapping between the parallel authorities.

One of the most useful agencies that operates successfully in most parts of London is the Day Nursery. These are generally provided by some private society, and up till 1930 were subsidized direct by the Ministry of Health. Since the Local Government Act of the previous year, the money is given through the borough council, which brings them into the cognizance of the local health service. Mothers who have to go out to work are enabled, in return for a small fee, to bring their babies in the early morning to a pleasant centre, where they are washed, put in clean clothes, fed and looked after till 6 p.m., when the mother on her way home picks up her child and takes it with her. In these days, when so many married women of all classes prefer to earn their own living, there should be one of these delightful day nurseries in every neighbourhood. But that is only by the way. With these activities at work it is not surprising that year by year the death-rate is falling, and what is more important, the general health of the community is improving.

In Bethnal Green, a very poor borough, in 1918 the infant mortality was 129 per 1,000 births; in 1929 it had gone down to 64 per 1,000; in other words it had halved.

Since the Education Act the education authorities can come on the scene at a very early age; they can, where they think necessary, open Nursery Schools. This idea has been slow to germinate, though, through the personal efforts of Miss Margaret McMillan, London is somewhat of a pioneer in this experiment. Her school down at Deptford has been subsidized by the London County Council, but the greater part of the money has been raised through the enthusiasm of this very remarkable lady.

Where the Day Nursery ends and where the Nursery School begins has not yet been clearly defined, but with such large areas without either, the time has not yet arrived to draw a definite line between them. The former takes children from birth to the age of three, is under the borough council, and the money granted is recommended for grant, received from the Ministry of Health; the latter takes them from three to five, is assisted by the London County Council, and is recognized for aid by the Board of Education.

But the Nursery School is essentially a health service. Sir George Newman, the chief medical officer to the Board of Education, in his report for the year 1926 writes:

The activities of the Nursery School are twofold, *medical*, and social and educational (particularly the elements of training in good habits). The chief aim is to provide the right environment, physical, mental, and social, for the proper development of very young children. Experience shows that fears lest the removal of such children from the home would result in lessened parental responsibility have no foundation. On all sides evidence is forthcoming that increased parental interest and co-operation for the welfare of the child is obtainable. This is shown in improved cleanliness and nurture, both personal and domestic, a wiser dietary, and in many cases more suitable clothing. . . . It involves provision for free movement, in sunlight when possible, in fresh air always, out of doors or indoors; regular periods for sleep and rest in the horizontal position; training in all desirable bodily habits, particularly personal cleanliness; and arrangements for meals, including suitable food at regular times.

The London County Council has recently opened two of these schools on its own. The child is kept from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., bathed, put into clean clothes, and provided with three meals a day in return for a small charge, very much as in the day nursery. Each week the children are medically inspected, and a very close watch is kept on their health.

The next stage in the child's life is the infants' school, which he may enter at three years of age, and then he comes under the surveillance of the school doctor. But this is more properly dealt with in my chapter on education; but as long as he is at school the State is keeping a watchful eye on his health. How different it was before the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act, 1907, came into operation is evidenced by an extract from the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on Poor Law:

Nearly the whole of the children of a slum quarter may go on year after year suffering from adenoids, inflamed glands, enlarged tonsils, defects of eyesight, chronic ear discharges, which will eventually prevent many of them from earning their livelihood.

Such a state of affairs would be quite impossible to-day, because the school doctor would very quickly get to know of the case, and off the child would go to a treatment centre, and all the machinery of the school medical organization would come into play to remedy the defect.

If the child leaves school before the age of sixteen there may be a gap to be filled up. I suppose if too poor to pay he would have to go to the district medical officer, formerly an officer of the Poor Law Guardians, and now, under their transferred powers, under the London County Council. But since 1911, at sixteen he becomes an insured person, he can select from the panel his own doctor, and henceforth in case of illness can call on him for advice and medicine. As the funds accumulate the benefits expand.

If he is too ill to stay at home new forces come into play, and, like so many things in London, they have been in a great many hands.

A special feature of London's institutional treatment of disease is the voluntary hospitals, many of them dating right back to the sixteenth century; they can almost trace lineal descent from the old monasteries. Certainly they are the pride of the people of London. Though they have done, and are still doing, magnificent work, their sites are spread unevenly over the metropolis. A hospital that was situated in a crowded working-class area may find itself located amongst offices or shops, and almost bereft of population, because of the movement outwards of the inhabitants. Great new suburban areas, on the other hand, may be without any large voluntary hospital in the immediate neighbourhood. Many of them are very short of beds; most of them are constantly short of money. The only thing they do not lack is good doctors. Their well-deserved reputation as medical schools, and the kudos attached to a position held in them, draws to their service the best medical brains in the British Empire. There are eleven of these great hospitals, each with a medical school; but there are numerous smaller ones dealing mostly with some special infirmity or disease: eye, throat, tuberculosis, and so on. Something of the voluntary character has disappeared since they commenced doing duties for public bodies. Nearly all of them run clinics for the London County Council education service, for which they are paid out of the county rate, while much of the work of combating venereal disease is done by them as agents for the health authorities.

But the greater part of the population, when sickness drives them to seek treatment outside their homes, must perforce go to the public infirmaries, where, it will come

as a surprise to many Londoners to learn, provide far more beds than all the voluntary hospitals put together. There are 108 voluntary hospitals, providing some 14,000 beds, against 54 infirmaries or public hospitals, providing close on 40,000 beds.

Before the transfer of the health service of the Poor Law Guardians to the Public Health Committee of the London County Council, most of the unions had their own infirmary or general hospital. In the first half of the nineteenth century these were very poor places; much of the nursing was done by pauper inmates, and there were many complaints about the inefficiency of the treatment accorded there. By the time of the Medical Relief Disqualification Removal Act in 1885 a great change had come over these infirmaries, and when they came to be transferred to the Council there was little to distinguish them, either in the qualifications of their nurses or the quality of their treatment, from the voluntary hospitals. There is a difference: the voluntary hospitals can select their patients, and can refuse admission once their wards are full; but the Poor Law puts on the authorities an obligation to provide treatment without delay, and it is next to impossible, however great the pressure on the space, for the public infirmaries to close their doors to any sick person.

Besides these infirmaries, the London County Council has also taken over the hospitals run by the Metropolitan Asylums Board. It was obviously unreasonable that each of the thirty boards of guardians should, on their own, make provision for a possible epidemic, nor was it safe to mix persons with infectious diseases with ordinary patients in the general infirmary. The Metropolitan Poor Act, 1867, combined parishes and unions into one district, called the Metropolitan Asylums District, for "the reception and relief

of poor persons infected or suffering from fever, or the disease of smallpox, or who may be insane."

I have dealt elsewhere with the constitution of the Metropolitan Asylums Board. A very fine and efficient organization was built up during the sixty-three years of its existence, until the transfer of its work to the London County Council in 1930.

Originally patients could only be admitted to the board's hospitals upon the order of a relieving officer, together with a certificate signed by a district medical officer of the guardians. A person suffering from fever found himself immediately classified as a pauper, and deprived of his voting rights at elections. This was not only a manifest injustice, but actually deterred people from availing themselves of the board's facilities, both to their own injury, and the danger of their neighbours who might come into contact with them. This anomaly was removed by the Disease Prevention (London) Act, 1883. At the time of its transfer to the London County Council the board had no less than 59 institutions with nearly 25,000 beds under some 200 doctors.

In a great city like London, with its population crowded together and constantly in touch with one another, in bus, tram, and tube, the possibilities of the spread of disease are immense. We have to thank the efficient organization of the Metropolitan Asylums Board for London's comparative immunity from serious epidemics. A highly organized ambulance service promptly deals with any case reported by the sanitary authority; a motor quietly draws up at the patient's house, and without any fuss or excitement he is conveyed to the isolation hospital, away from the danger of infecting others, and sure of the most skilful treatment and care.

Now that the Poor Law infirmaries and Asylums Board hospitals are all under the Central Public Health Committee of the London County Council, even greater opportunities present themselves for dealing with sickness on scientific lines. Often in the past an infirmary in one district was overcrowded at the very time when another had a number of empty beds. Besides, there has been a variation in standards and service. The whole of this great organization is rapidly being co-ordinated, so that in the future a sick Londoner may feel he has at his disposal over one hundred public hospitals with the very latest equipment and best medical and surgical treatment. It is hoped that sooner or later the voluntary hospitals, without in any way losing their independence, may dovetail into this system and that the best may be made of the two parallel organizations.

Mention here must be made of the fight against that dread disease, tuberculosis. The Health Insurance Act can claim the credit of opening up the battle. Amongst the benefits offered to insured persons by the National Health Insurance Act, 1911, was sanatorium treatment for tuberculosis. The County Insurance Committee was charged with the duty of making the necessary arrangements with persons or authorities, provided always they were not Poor Law authorities, because of the deep-rooted dislike of the whole of the working class of anything associated with guardians. When the London Insurance Committee began to explore the subject it found the organization in the best position to provide the sanatoria was the Metropolitan Asylums Board, but because of its association with the Poor Law it was precluded from entering into an arrangement with it. The difficulty was temporarily surmounted by the London County Council making an agreement with its Insurance Committee, and then contracting

with the Asylums Board to do the work; a three-cornered arrangement needlessly complicated, but made necessary by the state of the law. However, it enabled the Asylums Board to make a start to provide hospital accommodation until the position was regularized by the Amending Insurance Act of 1913. In 1912 the County medical officer had estimated that there were no less than 50,000 persons in London suffering from tuberculosis, of whom about 20,000 were covered by the Health Insurance Act. Under a scheme prepared by the County Council in 1914, the borough councils provided locally, often by arrangement with a voluntary hospital, dispensary treatment for both insured and uninsured persons who are not so bad as to have to leave home; half the cost of this service was found by the Exchequer grant, provided the scheme was approved by the London County Council. At the same time the London County Council came to an agreement with the Asylums Board to provide treatment for uninsured persons.

So you had the strange anomaly of the board taking one set of persons for treatment who happened to be insured from the London Insurance Committee, and another set of persons direct from the London County Council who were not covered by the Insurance Act; they might even be from the same family and received into the same sanatorium. This kind of thing could not go on indefinitely. The National Insurance Act of 1920, therefore, took the sanatorium treatment out of Insurance, and made it a service that insured and uninsured alike are entitled to, if suffering from tuberculosis.

During the war most of the energies of the Asylums Board were concentrated on meeting the needs of the Army, but since the Armistice a variety of open-air institutions on the most modern lines have been planned. Two have been

laid out in the pine woods of Surrey; a large hotel was acquired on the east coast for surgical tuberculosis, and a hospital for children at Margate. But there have never been enough beds to satisfy the demand, and many of the tubercular cases have had to be treated in the Poor Law infirmaries. Now the County Council has taken over both the Poor Law institutions and the sanatoria of the Asylums Board lock, stock, and barrel, they should so be able to arrange things that it should be possible to find a bed in an appropriate place for every tubercular person who requires hospital treatment.

Some progress, though slow, has been made in combating this disease; the death-rate for London in 1921 per 1,000 living was 1.07, and it had fallen to 0.96 in 1929. But the work that offers the greatest promise to combat this disease is the open-air school, run specially by the Education Committee for tubercular children.

While the fight is being waged against this terrible disease of the body, another and equally difficult one is being carried on against disease of the brain.

Under the statute *De Prærogativa Regis*, dating back to 1325, the principle is established that the care and the custody of all lunatics, as well as the administration of their property, are vested in the Crown. During the Middle Ages, however, as with the care of the poor, the monasteries and the Church looked after the insane, except they became dangerous, when they were treated as criminals and put into prison. Lunacy was looked upon as an act of God, and the village lunatic was regarded as much a part of the country life as the village inn and the village pump. But with the growth of big towns it became quite another story, and it was necessary in 1774 to pass an Act for the regulation of madhouses, which vested the duties of the Lord Chancellor

for the care of lunatics in the Cities of London and Westminster, and the County of Middlesex, in Commissioners of Lunacy, five persons elected annually by the Royal College of Physicians. This body carried on the work down till as late as 1828. I need not trace the various modifications made in the character of the commission, which are purely of academic interest.

In 1853 the justices for each county were made responsible for providing sufficient asylum accommodation, and were allowed to levy a general rate for the purpose. But this Act provided that the cost of maintaining pauper lunatics should be met by the Poor Law union to which they were chargeable when ascertainable. When the London County Council came into being it took over from the justices their responsibilities and a number of asylums they had constructed, including ones at Hanwell, Colney Hatch, and Banstead.

The position of the Council towards its new responsibility was defined and enlarged by the Lunacy Act of 1890. Provision was made in this Act for the setting up of a statutory committee with special powers and duties. In order to secure that it discharged its work effectively it was endowed with a status independent of and outside the ordinary London County Council organization. This at times proved most inconvenient, and in the light of experience in 1915 the Council obtained powers to operate its lunacy responsibilities much as it did its other work, constituting the committee very much on the lines of the Education Committee, dovetailing its work into the other duties of the Council.

Meanwhile the Mental Deficiency Act, 1913, brought under the care of the London County Council a new class of unfortunate—the mentally defective—persons not necessarily

mad within the meaning of the Lunacy Acts, but not in possession of all their faculties. Another committee had to be constituted to do this work. With the pressure of the war and the shortage of staff it was manifestly inconvenient to set up a separate committee to deal with a problem so closely akin to the other. Authority therefore was obtained to merge the two committees, and they appeared in 1917 under the joint title of the Asylums and Mental Deficiency Committee. In 1918, in order to avoid the odium attached to the word "Asylum," the committee came out under a new name, as the "Mental Hospitals" Committee.

Meanwhile the Metropolitan Asylums Board was doing cognate work which to the uninitiated is difficult to differentiate.

The Order of 1867 constituting the board included the insane amongst the patients to be provided for. In 1875 these were defined as

such harmless persons of the chronic or imbecile class as could lawfully be detained in a workhouse. No dangerous or curable person such as would come under the status in that behalf required to be sent to a Lunatic asylum, shall be admitted.

Before then these poor people were mixed up with the ordinary inmates in the general workhouse.

In the early days adults and children were sent to the same institutions, but in 1878 special schools were opened at Darenth. At this colony everything possible is done to make the best use of the limited faculties of the children. As far as possible they engage in the normal amusements and interests of the ordinary child—boy scouts and girl guides, cricket and football; while various workshops endeavour to develop their craft skill, which is often considerable. Cases that do not respond to treatment, and are of the most unsatisfactory kind, are removed to separate

institutions, because it is obviously open to objection that they should mix with the less abnormal.

With the absorption of the Metropolitan Asylums Board by the London County Council all these varieties of mental cases come under one control, and this should bring about good results. This business of dealing with mental derangement is a costly affair.

The Mental Hospitals Committee of the London County Council spent in the year ending March 1928 close on £1,600,000 on this account, while to this should be added another £600,000 spent by the Metropolitan Asylums Board on cognate work. The Council's mental hospitals provide accommodation for over 20,000 persons, and the Asylums Board provided for close on 10,000. The London County Council therefore now has 30,000 beds for various kinds of mental disorder, and will be paying out about £2,200,000 a year. The natural question to ask is, What good is it doing? Is it merely an act of mercy to care for these poor helpless people, or can anything be done to combat lunacy? The figures superficially are not promising. From 1890 to 1915 the figures rose from 20,000 to over 30,000 cases. During the war period there was a remarkable decline. It would be thought that the strain and excitement of the war would have had the reverse effect. The only explanation given is, that the general prosperity relieved many persons of unstable mind from the financial strain that drives them over the border-line. The figures have increased again, but they are still well below the 1915 figure, although the period synchronizes with a period of trade depression and unemployment. I am inclined to think that while the care and treatment of the modern asylum does do something to cure, the noise and rush of modern life have a bad effect on the highly nervous temperament with a tendency to lunacy.

The possibilities of curative measures have not been lost sight of.

In 1895 Sir Francis Mott was appointed pathologist, and a special laboratory was opened for scientific investigation.

In 1908 Dr. Maudsley offered £30,000 for the equipment of a proper hospital for mental disease. Progress with the idea was held up by the war. Another £10,000 was bequeathed by Dr. Maudsley in 1918, and the hospital known as the Maudsley, and situated at Denmark Hill, is being used for voluntary patients, who are encouraged to enter it at an early stage of mental trouble for early curative treatment. This is one of the most promising experiments, that if successful seems to show the way to deal with mental disease.

CHAPTER X

HOUSING

HOUSING has loomed very large in the public eye since the war. The nation's conscience seems to have been thoroughly aroused to the deplorable condition under which so many people are condemned to live in most of our great cities. But it would be a mistake to run away with the idea that it is a new problem.

For eighty years Parliament has been legislating on the housing question in one way and another. The late Lord Shaftesbury can be said to be the pioneer housing reformer. Two Acts generally associated with his name were passed as long ago as 1851. They aimed at the improvement of the common lodging-house.

A series of Acts followed in quick succession. The custom of associating Housing Acts with their sponsors, initiated then, has continued ever since.

The Torrens Acts gave powers to deal drastically with individual insanitary dwellings, while the Cross Acts (associated with the name of Viscount Cross) initiated the attack on slum areas as opposed to individual houses.

But improvement was slow, and a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the whole question. How much importance was attached to it even in the eighties is evident by the appointment to the commission of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII. Out of this commission came the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1885, afterwards consolidated and amended with previous

Acts into the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, which is the foundation of all the present-day powers of local authorities.

The Act of 1890 was divided into three sections. Part I enabled local authorities to clear slums and carry out large improvement schemes. Part II empowered them to deal with individual and small groups of bad dwellings. Part III gave them for the first time the right both to rehouse people displaced and to develop new estates. These three sections have come to be familiarly known by housing authorities as Part I powers, Part II powers, and Part III powers.

In London Parts I and III are administered by the London County Council, and Part II by the borough councils, this division of responsibilities sometimes causing delay and confusion. The question naturally arises whether a particular slum is too large for the borough council to deal with, or alternatively, too small for the London County Council.

The next landmark in pre-war housing is the John Burns Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909, which for the first time introduced the principle of the planning of unbuilt areas.

Restricted as the powers were, it is surprising what considerable results were achieved by London authorities without any financial assistance from the State. Even the old Metropolitan Board of Works can place to its credit the clearance of forty-two acres, affecting 22,900 persons, at a cost of £1,325,000. But the board never attempted to rehouse the people on its own volition: it sold the sites with a restricted covenant that they must be utilized for the construction of houses suitable for the working classes, generally to such societies as the Four per Cent Trust or the Artisans' Dwellings Company.

The London County Council took over from their predecessors some fifteen and a half acres of uncompleted schemes;

but instead of proceeding to sell the sites, they very soon initiated the policy of themselves developing them.

The first of these sites to be reconstructed by the Council itself was the Boundary Street area. This was one of the worst plague spots in the county, as evidenced by an interesting extract from the report on school children in 1870:

The whole moral tone was inconceivably low. The people's lives consisted of constant deception and concealment. There was scarcely a family but appeared to have some reason for fearing the police, and a large proportion of the men were on ticket of leave. The entire population had an absolute dread of fresh air and cleanliness. Except upon the occurrence of a funeral (for these people paid more respect to the dead than to the living), rooms and passages were reeking in filth for months, and even years.

This district will repay a visit to-day. Situated just near Shoreditch Church, in place of the fifteen and a half acres of squalor will be found delightful block dwellings of pleasant elevation, intersected by gardens and open spaces. The standard of accommodation when these were designed was much below what is aimed at to-day, but compared with what they replaced they were veritable palaces.

This scheme was carried out under Part I of the Housing Act of 1890. Before the war the Council dealt with some further forty acres, displacing nearly 17,000 people, all of whom had to be rehoused. But there was another side of clearance that involved rehousing. Many schools had to be provided in the centre, sites for which could not be found without disturbing people in their homes. Great improvements, such as Kingsway, could not be carried through without pulling down houses, and some unpleasant old rookeries were uprooted in the process. Accommodation for 12,000 people disturbed in this way was found by the Council. Incidentally, too, the Council in its improvements scheme had to pull down some unpleasant common lodging-

houses. In their place they have built three large model lodging-houses, two of which can be seen quite near the Drury Lane Theatre. They are really a kind of working man's hotel. Cubicles are provided at a low charge, with facilities for cooking his own food for the man who wants to, ~~as~~ well as hot baths. Altogether they can accommodate nearly 2,000 men.

But it was not until 1898 that the Council availed itself of its powers under Part III to build and develop new estates apart from a clearance or an improvements scheme. The former work was acquiesced in; but when they proceeded to open up new estates and build working-class houses they at once roused the hostility of the building trade and other interests. The first of these experiments was at Totterdown Fields, Tooting. But difficulties in finding sites inside the county boundary at a reasonable figure finally led the London County Council to look farther afield. Two estates outside London were acquired, one north of the Thames, at Tottenham, and another south of the Thames, at Norbury. This led to still further opposition, and it was these wild schemes, as they were then thought to be, that provided part of the indictment against the old Progressive Party, and contributed to their debacle in 1907. All these estates have since been successfully developed, but there is this very marked difference between them and post-war estates. They pay their way; they show a profit after paying all outgoings and providing a sinking fund to pay for the whole cost of land and building within sixty years; while the post-war houses show a heavy loss, and it is only possible to make two ends meet with the help of subsidies from the rates and taxes. Conditions, of course, are different. Money could be borrowed before the war at a lower rate, building material was cheaper, and wage costs lower.

But the fact remains that some of those who were so ready to condemn the efforts of those housing pioneers of the first years of the twentieth century have to carry on the work now at a heavy cost to the community, much of which might have been saved if the old policy had been more vigorously pursued before the war.

There was a different atmosphere after the war. The war had brought classes together as never before; while the administration of soldiers' allowances opened the eyes of many people to working-class conditions. Besides, for four years house-building had been brought to a standstill; there had not been the normal construction to replace wastage and provide for the ordinary increase in the population.

Add to this a stupendous increase in the cost of materials, and a rise in wage cost, and the size of the problem will be realized.

The Housing Act of 1919, or Addison Act as it is familiarly called, simply stated, made provision that the Government would make good all losses on approved schemes over and above the proceeds of a penny rate. This scheme offered great attractions to small towns and rural areas with a low rateable value, but in a place like London, where the produce of a penny rate is £165,000, it did not offer great inducements.

However, in those days enthusiasm was at fever heat, and without delay the Council approved a scheme that was within five years to build 29,000 dwellings and house no less than 145,000 people, and to clear away slums that meant displacing another 40,000 persons, all of whom would presumably have to be rehoused. These proposals were in due course endorsed by the Ministry of Health. But with time enthusiasm cooled. An economy stunt loomed large in 1921. The "Geddes Axe" (called after Sir Eric Geddes,

chairman of the Government Economy Committee) was looking for victims, and housing was selected as one of them. The finance of the scheme had not been well thought out, but though that might be a reason for changing the terms, it was not one for a complete reversal of policy.

Meanwhile a good start had been made. Three thousand acres of land had been bought at Becontree by the London County Council at an average price of a little over £100 per acre. It was a site between the town of Ilford and the River Thames.

The original proposal was to develop it as a kind of garden city, with its own civic centre, obtaining for it separate local government powers. The idea was a sound one, but it was never followed up. If it had been, many difficulties that have had to be overcome might have been avoided.

The site is in three separate local government areas—Ilford, Barking, and Dagenham, and for education purposes in the county of Essex.

There was trouble about the water-supply and gas; there have been many delays about drainage and sewerage, while none of the authorities concerned have been over-anxious to welcome a population drawn from a class that would require many services, but owing to the low rateable value of their houses would bring in comparatively little revenue.

This, however, was not the first estate instituted by the Council after the war. While negotiations were going on for its development a start had been made on a very attractive site at Roehampton, adjacent to Wimbledon Common. This turned out a costly affair. Materials were scarce, there was a shortage of bricklayers, tenders were difficult to obtain, and many of the houses, with land, cost well over £1,000 to build. The Council therefore decided to develop Becontree on novel lines. After competitive prices had

been called for, they selected a firm of large contractors to act as agents on commission, all materials and labour, even plant, being paid for by the London County Council. A sliding scale of commission, provided for in a complicated contract, aimed at giving the contractor every inducement to keep down costs.

The years 1921 to 1923 were a period of comparative inactivity, following the economy campaign. But in the latter year appeared the Chamberlain Act, which fundamentally altered the terms of State assistance. It limited the State's liability to a sum not exceeding £6 per house a year over a period of twenty years, on the understanding that the local authorities would find a similar amount, though as it turned out, at any rate as far as London was concerned, the loss was considerably more than that amount. Certain conditions were attached to the subsidy. In order to ensure that help was limited to houses for the working classes, assistance was confined to those that contained not more than nine hundred and fifty superficial feet; on the other hand, to secure that the accommodation provided a minimum standard of decency, they were to contain at least six hundred and twenty superficial feet, and to be supplied with a fixed bath. Partly in order to encourage rapid building, and partly to limit the Government's liability, the houses to qualify had to be completed by 1925, with a possible extension to 1926.

But the Conservative Government were anxious to encourage private enterprise, and with that end in view local authorities were permitted to give grants to individuals, and advances by way of loan to builders of houses of suitable dimensions.

The Wheatley Act of the next year, sponsored by the Labour Government, followed the same lines, but made the



BETHNAL GREEN DAY NURSERY

Photopiess

See p. 117



BECONTREE ESTATE

London County Council

See p. 135

terms more attractive. It aimed at encouraging a systematic programme extending over a period of fifteen years; houses completed before 1939 being entitled to an increased subsidy of £9 per year for forty years. This rate of subsidy was made subject to revision every two years, the idea being that if advantage was taken of the grant to inflate prices, or if conditions changed, the State could alter the amount of the grant. Local authorities were still required to bear their share of the loss, £4 10s. per annum being estimated as their contribution.

For the years immediately following the passage of these two Acts, the Council returned to its policy of developing estates on the outskirts of London: Becontree in the east; the completing of a pre-war estate in the north, White Hart Lane, as well as Watling in the north-west; two in the south, Bellingham and Downham; in the west, Castelnau and Wormholt; and St. Helier and Roehampton in the south-west.

In 1927 the Council decided to modify its policy, and instead of buying cheap land on the outskirts, acquire sites in the centre, and build, instead of cottages, five-story blocks of flats. But not much progress has been made with the scheme. It is difficult to find unbuilt-on land conveniently situated, except at exorbitant prices; and when any land has been found that presents possibilities, invariably the Council has met with opposition from a variety of interests that it perhaps too readily succumbed to.

Experience has proved that the only way to really grapple with the housing shortage is to aim at variety of accommodation and position. The people of London follow such a multitude of occupations, working at all times of the day and night, that it is quite impossible to standardize the kind of house they are to live in.

One curious anomaly has arisen as a result of the London

County Council housing policy. Considerable portions of its estates are situated outside the county boundary—in Essex, in Middlesex, and in Surrey. The London County Council takes people from London, and houses them outside, becomes their landlord, undertakes to subsidize their rents out of London rates for sixty years; but they cease to be either citizens, voters, or ratepayers inside London. I dwell elsewhere on the problem of Greater London, but this is an anomaly that sooner or later will have to be faced. The new authorities, under which these tenants of out-county estates come, do not receive them with open arms. Generally the tenants are none too well off; schools have to be provided for their children; the cottages are assessed low, and the rates from them do not cover the services which the local authority has to provide.

Some years ago I suggested that, following the example of the ancient Greeks, London should establish "colonies" ten or even twenty miles out, where not only the inhabitants but their industries should be transplanted. These colonies should have their own civic government, have the status of boroughs, and the inhabitants should retain the London citizenship. London should be responsible for the education, and the London County Council should do for them very much the same work as it does for existing London boroughs. I can visualize a new Paddington, a new Poplar, a new Bethnal Green, situated in sylvan surroundings amidst green fields.

The London County Council is by no means the only authority providing houses in the Greater London area. The councils outside London have between them built in the metropolitan area between 1920 and 1929 no less than 30,000 houses and flats, and the city and borough councils inside have added another 11,000.

Private enterprise has constructed another 160,000 houses of all classes, though more in the direction of houses to sell than to let. If everything provided by all agencies, both public and private, is added together, no less than 240,000 houses and flats were built in Greater London between 1920 and 1929.

These are big figures, but London is a large place with a population somewhere about 7,000,000. There is a constant wastage going on; houses become worn out, dwelling-houses are converted into factories and shops, while all the time there is a slow but steady increase in the population, for though there has been an actual decline in the total population living inside the county, the number of families has increased. People are getting married, and some sort of home has to be found for the young couples. Besides, the working man is not prepared any longer to put up with pre-war conditions: families that would live in one or two rooms without complaint if rent were low, education has taught to demand the minimum of decency. The Council, though it is constantly closing its lists, has generally a waiting list of 24,000 applicants registered as persons desiring accommodation on their estates. In the year 1929-30 there were nearly 200,000 inquiries for accommodation on the Council's estates.

Which brings me to the other side of the housing problem—*Slum Clearance*, or Part I of the Housing Acts. I have always thought this division of the housing question was thoroughly artificial. Overcrowding cannot be divided from the development of new estates. If persons are persuaded to leave the centre and go to live in the suburbs, even if they do not come from the actual slums, they should release their rooms for somebody else, and remove the pressure on the most congested part. The process may be

slow and imperceptible, but if the result of this policy is that there are enough rooms to go round and to spare, in the end slums will cure themselves.

Some reference must be made here to the Rent Restrictions Act. During the war, with house-building stopped, and with serious shortage of accommodation, it became necessary to protect the tenant from exploitation. Restriction, however, in 1921 was removed from business premises, and in 1923 dwelling-houses were decontrolled as soon as the existing tenant vacated them. One of the results has been that in the East End, as soon as a local authority finds accommodation elsewhere for a householder in a crowded area, instead of that accommodation becoming available for someone else, or the sum total of rooms being added to, it is frequently converted into a small factory or workshop, though there may be plenty of large factory accommodation available in the district.

The Chamberlain Act of 1923 made provision on a fifty-fifty basis for slum clearance, half the cost being borne out of funds provided by Parliament, and the other half out of rates.

Some twenty-four areas, covering about 100 acres, and displacing about 30,000 persons, have been dealt with by the London County Council under this and other schemes since the war. Many unexpected difficulties have had to be faced. The Addison Act showed little mercy for the real slum landlord. It was felt that the man who allowed his property to sink into bad repair, or let houses unfit for human habitation, should receive short shrift from the State; and if he received compensation for the land as a housing site cleared for building, it was all he was entitled to. However, the provisions of the Act have met with great opposition from many owners, and endless delays have

ensued. Even with the best of good will, slum clearances take time. Before a house can be pulled down fresh accommodation must usually be found in the immediate neighbourhood for the persons displaced, and often it is difficult to get a closing order from a magistrate. Before owners can be dispossessed a public inquiry has to be held, and representation made by a medical officer—a slow and painful process.

It is to try to expedite the process that the Greenwood Act of 1930 has been passed. Local authorities are authorized to declare an area where the houses "are by reason of disrepair or sanitary defects unfit for human habitation," or where "the narrowness or bad arrangement of the streets" is "dangerous or injurious to the health of the inhabitants of the area," a *Clearance Area*. They can proceed either to order the demolition of the buildings, or purchase and deal with the houses themselves. Or alternatively, where a considerable district, because of the arrangement of the houses, or the narrowness of the streets, is dangerous to the health of the neighbourhood, they may declare it an *Improvement Area*, in which case they need not clear it all away, but can demolish such houses as are unfit for human habitation, or buy land which it is "expedient to acquire for opening out the area." In order to stimulate local authorities to deal with their areas, and to ease the financial burden on the authorities, the Act makes provision for a Government grant of £2 5s. for every person displaced by these schemes, provided suitable accommodation has been rendered available by the authority in new houses. But the grant is raised to £2 10s. per person where the accommodation must necessarily be provided in block dwellings of more than three stories, and where the land on which they are built is valued at more than £3,000 per acre.

This is to meet the case of places like London, where most of the inhabitants in a congested district, owing to the nature of their occupation, cannot go out to cottage estates, while the value of land in the neighbourhood is very high.

In fact experience shows that almost all the persons displaced by slum clearances will have to be rehoused in block dwellings; and it is therefore quite clear that London will be able to claim the higher rate of the grant. The Act is a long one and consists of sixty-six pages, and covers a great variety of conditions; but the greater part of it deals with the setting up of machinery, the success of which will depend on the driving power behind it, both in the local councils and at the Ministry of Health.

I cannot close this chapter on housing better than by quoting some significant figures.

All the dwellings provided by the London County Council, both before the war and since the war, under all its various powers, in new estates, and to replace houses pulled down, came on 11 October, 1930, to just on 50,000, housing a population of no less than 230,000. The rent-roll of this great population came to nearly £2,000,000. To manage the estates is a great undertaking. The Council makes few bad debts; rarely is a cottage empty, and the tenants are seldom behind with their rents. The pre-war houses pay for themselves, but it is estimated roughly under the 1924 Housing Act that something like nineteen per cent of the cost of these cottages is found out of rates and taxes. The Council's share of this loss involves just over a penny on the London rates, which compared with the cost of other services is infinitesimal. Immediately after the war the cost of building was very high, and many of the first houses worked out at about £1,000 apiece. In 1930, excluding the land,

but including roads and sewers, the London County Council cottages cost about £550 each.

The Housing Act of 1930 requires local authorities to prepare schemes giving particulars of their plans for dealing with housing conditions for five years.

The first quinquennial statement was presented by the London County Council to the Minister of Health in December 1930. These particulars given at this early stage are at best only a rough estimate.

First, under the Wheatley Act of 1924 the estimated number of State- and rate-aided cottages which it is proposed to build is given as 28,470, involving a capital expenditure of £16,900,000. Some of these are to be built on two estates outside London, at Becontree and Morden; others on similar new sites, to buy which £500,000 has been voted; while the balance are to be built on ten sites inside London.

Secondly, an attempt is made to estimate the amount of progress likely to be made in the same time in slum clearance and the rehousing which it involves. Twenty-seven different areas are mentioned, involving ninety-eight acres and a population of 30,000. There are also a certain number of schemes already in hand but not yet completed.

Together these clearance and improvement schemes will mean an expenditure of close on £5,000,000.

If everything works out to programme the next five years, will see an expenditure of £21,850,000 on housing for London.

I only hope that these anticipations will be fulfilled. It is quite sound to plan ahead; but in most years expenditure has fallen far short of estimates. Policy has changed from time to time; unexpected difficulties have held up development; sometimes even supplies of material have run short.

No doubt the ratepayer will be alarmed at these big figures. But at most the housing losses cannot involve more than an expenditure of twopence on the rates, and against this must be placed the improved health, fewer hospitals, fewer asylums, less crime, and the improved efficiency of the people brought up in decent environments.

CHAPTER XI

TRAFFIC

RAPID and cheap transport is the life blood of a modern city. it cannot live without it. How vital it is to a town of the size of London was realized at the General Strike of 1926. And as the population grows and spreads the residents become more and more dependent on efficient service to move them to and from their homes and their work. It is intimately associated with the housing question. If people cannot get quickly and cheaply from the outer to the inner town, many perforce remain tied to the centre, high rents are maintained, and slums are created.

All great towns are conscious of the problem. Almost every important city except London has had a free hand, to deal with it.

Many experiments have been made in America; New York has alternated between a State-appointed Commission and the City Council, but the public is supreme. In Boston a State Commission operates subways and tramways belonging to joint-stock companies, and levies a rate when a deficiency arises.

Paris owns the *métro*, the tramway, and the omnibus services, leases them to operating companies, but regulates services and fares.

Berlin owns and operates her trams, and though the old local railways are run by companies, the latest underground has been constructed by the City Council, and is operated by a company. The motor omnibuses are owned jointly

by the city and the electric railways, the former having a right to appoint half the directors. But the City Council is supreme.

In the Dominions the cities almost invariably own and operate their important passenger services. So do Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Glasgow. All our great provincial towns own and operate their tramways: if competition is allowed from bus companies it is only under the authority of the corporation, who themselves control the police.

In London it has been quite another story, except for the one square mile that comprises the City, where the Corporation exercises supreme authority. As it both owns the streets and manages the police, it has been able to say whether a tramway shall operate along a certain street, and which routes shall be used by the omnibuses.

In the days of the old horse traffic the London problem was not a serious one, but with the development of mechanical means of transport every day it becomes more acute. There are four agencies of transit in the metropolitan area: (1) the main trunk lines through their suburban traffic; (2) the London underground railways; (3) the omnibuses; and (4) the tramways. The London tramways have had a somewhat curious history, and have always been a matter of acute political controversy.

The Tramways Act of 1870 made the Metropolitan Board of Works the authority for London: it could have embarked on the enterprise itself, but it took advantage of the power to farm it out, and gave the concession to a private company, though only for a period of twenty-one years. These were the days of the old horse tram. When electrification became general in other parts of the country the London company had only a comparatively short term left to run, and they

naturally did not show any inclination to convert their system. Not very long after the London County Council was brought into being, the future of the tramways became a subject of debate. In 1891 a chance to buy a short length of tramway brought the matter to a head, and after a long controversy purchase was decided on. Again in 1896 the discussion was reopened when the lease of the London tramways north of the Thames terminated, but the Moderate Party were strong enough to withhold the necessary majority required to take over the undertaking. Two years after, the term of the company's concession for the trams south of the Thames lapsed, and this time the Progressives carried the day.

It was, not however, until 1906 that the County Council bought out the northern system, with the consequent delay in electrification. In order to avoid the unsightly overhead wires it was decided to use the expensive conduit system in the centre, using the overhead only in the outer area. This accounts for the heavy cost per mile of London tramway construction.

The tramways had many obstacles to face. First, to complete the system and link up the north and south, parliamentary powers had to be obtained to take the lines over the bridges, but though the Bill went through the Commons it was thrown out by the House of Lords; it was solemnly argued that it would be a disfigurement to our beautiful Thames to have such a vulgar thing as a tram across it. However, popular clamour was so strong that in the next year the "Lords" climbed down, and the Bill went through, though Parliament was never too friendly to London trams. While provincial cities were free to complete and perfect their systems, every attempt to extend or link up the metropolitan lines was viewed with suspicion.

But the Council had another difficulty: it is not the street

authority. First the vestry, and afterwards their successors, the borough councils, seemed to take a delight in vetoing every tramway proposal. It was not as if in the first ten years of the century there were other satisfactory methods of travel. The horse bus was still on the street, smoke fouled the atmosphere of the District and Metropolitan railways, and the tube system was in its infancy.

However, already Parliament was conscious of the need for some reform, and a Royal Commission was appointed that in 1905 reported:

It is imperatively necessary in the interests of public health and public convenience and for the prompt transaction of business as well as to render decent housing possible, that the means of locomotion and transport in London and its adjacent districts should be improved . . . increased modern means of locomotion and transport are needed both to facilitate movement within the central area and to facilitate access to and from and within the suburbs for those who work in London and live outside. Electric tramways and railways are necessary for both these purposes, tramways mostly for the former and railways mostly for the latter, with inter-connection between the two. The tramway system of London is disconnected and insufficient; it should be largely extended and portions of the tramway system that are now isolated should be linked together, through communication being provided from East to West, from North to South.

These recommendations have not yet been carried out. Dead ends have not been linked up, and very few extensions have been permitted. Meanwhile the years immediately before the war saw a new factor. Any one could ply for hire on the streets of London, and provided they could satisfy the police authorities at Scotland Yard that there was nothing against their character, and that the vehicle was safe, there was no difficulty in obtaining a licence. The three principal companies owning horse buses—the London General, originally a French company; the London Road Car Company; and Tillings—speedily converted their



London County Council
BRADY STREET AREA, NEATH PLACE
East End from the West

See p. 139

services from horse to motor traction; but other new companies appeared on the scene, such as the Vanguard and the National Steam, with no horse tradition to handicap them. Competition had free play, and the public was well served.

Financial difficulties, however, had brought American business men, who provided the money for electrification, into the affairs of the District Railway. These gentlemen did not view with favour the free play of competition and an open market. They first proceeded to amalgamate the District and Tube interests. The next step was to obtain a controlling interest in the General Omnibus Company, and then to run off the streets or buy out competing companies, a policy they have pursued ever since, with more or less success.

It was not a long step to bring together the railway and bus interests under one managing board with interlocking interests, with the ultimate creation of a holding company, the Underground Electric. This is by no means the whole of the story. There are a number of tramways in Middlesex owned by the local authority but leased to a company. These concerns somehow or other have also found their way into the all-embracing arms of what has come to be known as the Traffic Combine or Trust.

Certain interests remained outside. First, the Metropolitan Railway, a local underground service distinct from the District Railway, refused to be absorbed; secondly, there was nothing to prevent private individuals running new road services; and thirdly, the London County Council tramways followed their own policy as a municipal undertaking. The war kept men's minds too busy with world affairs to allow much time for thought of London traffic. But as everywhere else, London streets, which were adequate for the slow-moving horse traffic, were quite insufficient

for the rapidly growing number of fast-moving motors. People are inclined to speak as if all the trouble was caused by the increase in the number of omnibuses on the streets. Nothing is farther from the truth. The private car, the taxi, the lorry, and the tradesman's motor all contribute their share to the general congestion.

Very soon after the Armistice a Select Committee was set up to inquire into "Transport in the Metropolitan Area." In the opening paragraph of the report dated July 1919 they put on record their opinion that the

reason for the demoralization of traffic in Greater London [was] the absence of a supreme Traffic Authority for Greater London, possessing executive powers to control, co-ordinate, and to safeguard and further public interests. . . . The immediate creation by Parliament of a London Traffic Authority can alone remedy the present intolerable condition.

They turned down the suggestion that the authority should be "merely consultative or advisory," but put forward the view that the business of the supreme traffic authority should be

to enforce a working scheme between all the services in which the only consideration will be a maximum of convenience and comfort to the public consistent with the reasonable financial requirements of each operating concern.

A contention that very few people will be found to dispute.

But the next paragraph is illuminating, in view of the high claims put forward by the combine:

. . . there is no ground whatever for the acceptance of the combine's view that their surface activities merit, at least as far as omnibuses are concerned, any special franchise, and certainly not a monopoly, and their antagonism to the L.C.C. (and presumably any other development) either in respect of tramway extension or motorbus running would not be entertained by any executive authority . . . it is very necessary, in the opinion of your Committee, to lay stress on this point, because all the "combine" evidence tended to show that its operations are aimed at "pegging out claims" which one day may be put forward as vested rights.

The composition of the new authority they advanced should be

. . . small in numbers for efficiency's sake. Five members as a maximum to be appointed by the Government from nominations submitted by: the Home Office, one; Ministry of Ways and Communications, one; London County Council, one; Local Authorities outside London, one; with an independent chairman to be appointed by the Government.

All these members being paid for whole-time service, but it was not to be an owning authority.

The Government, however, did not seem to have been satisfied with this report. The Ministry of Transport set up a London Advisory Committee under the chairmanship of the late Mr. Kennedy Jones. This reported in March 1920 in favour of a London Traffic Authority under the Minister of Transport, consisting of a chairman with a salary of £4,000 a year, and two other members, each paid £3,000 a year. This authority, besides advising and co-ordinating, was to prescribe routes "to be followed by all or any form and classes of traffic." But there was no hint of any authority with powers to take over, or carry on, any form of transport service itself.

Meanwhile the London County Council had not been asleep, and on 3 May, 1921, a resolution was passed asking the Government to introduce legislation for

the unified *operation* of local passenger transport undertakings in Greater London and for the setting up for such area of a *Municipal* Traffic Authority (to be appointed by the Local Authorities affected), it being understood that the establishment of such an authority shall be regarded as a temporary expedient pending the settlement of the question of the local government in Greater London, and in the event of a new governing authority being set up for the area and with the requisite powers, such an authority shall take the place of the municipal traffic authority, herein referred to.

In fact it was the traffic needs of London that was one of

the primary causes for the claim of the Council for a Royal Commission on the London problem. But it is significant that at this date the London County Council came down strongly in favour of unified operation of passenger service, and gave special emphasis to the municipal character of the proposed authority.

The Royal Commission on London Government in its report dated 1923 gave considerable space to traffic. They came to the conclusion that the existing Metropolitan and City police area or any extension thereto, as recommended by the Advisory Committee of 1920, was too restricted, and that "any attempt to deal on special lines with a metropolitan traffic area apart from the rest of Great Britain was open to criticism."

The Ministry of Transport as a separate department was only established in 1919, and the Advisory Committee in 1920 had not been in a position to judge its utility after only a few months' experience of its operation. The Royal Commission on London Government, however, was able to form an opinion on the efficiency of the new department after three years' survey of its work. They recommended working through it, rather than a special London authority, which it rightly pointed out "would cost the taxpayer £10,000 a year for the salaries of the members of the Authority alone." It therefore recommended "an advisory body should be established under statute by the name of the London and Home Counties Advisory Committee, to advise and assist the appropriate Minister," a proposal which afterwards formed the basis of the London Traffic Act of 1924.

While commissions and committees were inquiring and recommending, the traffic problem was not standing still, and this seems to be an appropriate moment to analyse the situation.

The total number of passenger journeys for the Greater London area in 1929 reached close on 4,000,000,000, or an average for the inhabitants of all ages of one and one-third journeys per head per day. The figures are made up as follows:

• Railways	961,978,475
Tramways	1,076,250,997
Omnibuses	1,912,292,980

In the report of the London County Council valuer, from which these figures are taken, he points out that

division shows the railways to have less than one-fourth of the total, but in regard to this it has to be borne in mind that the journeys differ in average value, and that the average length of journey on the railways is considerably more than on the tramways and omnibuses.

The Select Committee in 1919 had estimated the local passenger traffic in 1918:

Local Railways	699,000,000
Tramways	992,000,000
Omnibuses (including Tillings and National Steam)	682,000,000

2,373,000,000

In 1913, the last complete pre-war year, the total was 2,007,348,055, while in 1908 the figures were only 1,363,815,165.

The reasons for this great increase are various, but may be accounted for by the improved facilities, the greater speed, and perhaps it may be added, the larger opportunities for pleasure, such as theatres, cinemas, race tracks (dog and dirt).

But the travel habit has come to stay. There is a spirit of restlessness that encourages movement. One factor has nothing to do with psychology. As the town grows the people necessarily must live farther from their work.

Travel facilities are tied up with the housing question. Where cheap and fast conveyance is not available the population must live close to their work, with the inevitable creation of slums.

When cheap workmen's trains were provided by the Great Eastern Railway from Liverpool Street Station there was a general trend outwards from areas near the City, with the consequent decrease in the congestion for a time. But as the railway got overloaded and the land within reasonable distance got filled up with houses, the migration slowed down, a tendency accentuated by the stoppage of building during the war.

The building of new estates by the London County Council on the outskirts of London has shown how much housing and traffic are interconnected. The 3,000-acre estate at Becontree for a time was paralysed by the insufficiency of travel facilities, though incidentally its development caused overcrowding of the trains on the railway lines serving it. The real point is, the more the town grows the more the people must travel.

The traffic problem in London has been somewhat confused by the tram controversy. And the merit of the tramcar as a means of conveyance has been involved in a dispute between the merits of private and municipal trading. All great provincial cities and most foreign ones own and run their own tramways. As a means of transport tramways differ from railways because they use the public highway; and they differ from the motor bus in that running as they do on fixed lines they must by their nature enjoy a monopoly in that form of transport.

It is really a question whether this monopoly should be owned and worked by a public authority, or owned by the authority and the franchise leased to a public company.

Curiously enough, the two methods of dealing with tramways can be seen working in Greater London. Inside the county the London County Council own and operate their tramcars; outside the boundary the Middlesex County Council own the lines, but lease the franchise to a company that is part of the Traffic Combine.

It has never been seriously suggested that the latter are more efficiently run than the former. On the contrary, I think it can be argued that, on the whole, the municipal system is the most satisfactory, though the company's trams have the very great advantage of close co-operation with the underground railways and omnibus service, all being under the same general management.

Certain districts, such as Croydon and West Ham, also own and run their tramways.

From the latest figures I have available:

The London County Council carried 691,000,000 passengers, and ran 69,000,000 car miles.

Other metropolitan authorities carried 126,000,000 passengers, and ran 11,000,000 car miles.

Total: carried 817,000,000 passengers, and ran 80,000,000 car miles.

Tramway companies carried 172,000,000 passengers, and ran 20,000,000 car miles.

Motor-car owners have a natural prejudice against trams. Owing to their inflexibility trams impede faster-moving traffic, and they suffer at present from the fact that passengers board them in the centre of the road, adding to the risk of accident.

But against this it must be remembered that many millions were sunk in constructing the permanent way before the possibility of motor transport was realized. Once the

capital has been spent it is far more economical to utilize the lines than to scrap them.

And at the peak-load time, i.e. in the early morning when the population is going to work, and in the evening when it is returning home, it would be almost impossible to carry the traffic without them.

There is a general impression abroad, too, that the London County Council tramways are run at a loss. During one or two years they had a bad time because of severe competition, a dead set being made by the omnibus companies against the whole system. Omnibuses were concentrated on tram routes at the most profitable times, while, the tram lines being excluded from the West End, retaliation was difficult. The London County Council have never shown a loss on working: the misunderstanding has arisen because of the method of keeping public as opposed to private accounts.

Tramways were built out of moneys borrowed from the public in the form of a municipal loan, i.e. London County Council stock, and on this loan interest is paid. When money is raised by a company for a similar purpose, it appears under three categories: debentures, preference shares, and ordinary shares. Interest on the municipal loan is equivalent to the amounts distributed to these three categories of shareholders, though the former is regarded as a charge, and the latter as profits.

But there is another factor that is confusing to the public anxious to judge London County Council tramway finance. The Treasury requires a public authority to pay off all the capital cost of the undertaking out of revenue in twenty-five years. Before, therefore, the London County Council can show a profit on its tramways it has to pay interest on the money invested and also provide this heavy sinking fund.

There are other burdens that press heavily on the undertaking. First, they have to maintain the roadway on which the lines are laid, which otherwise would have to be paid for by the local authorities through which the tramways run. Secondly, they are required to pay rates on the permanent way to the borough council, which in return relieves the general ratepayer. If the tram lines were pulled up, the ratepayer would be the poorer by the loss of these two contributions.

While I am not anxious to burden a chapter on traffic with too many figures connected with what is, after all, only one phase of a very large subject, tramway finance has loomed so large in the public eye that a simple statement of the position seems necessary.

For the twelve months ending 31 March, 1930:

The income was	£4,460,536
The working expenses were	£3,619,329
	<hr/>
	£ 841,207

Against this surplus the following charges:

Debt charges, the great part of which would be available for dividend in the case of a company	£758,625	
Income Tax, Schedule D, in addition to Property Tax £43,900, included in working expenses	£ 20,436	
Parliamentary expenses	£ 312	
Amount due to Leyton for working their trams	£ 14,383	
	<hr/>	
	£793,756	
Less sundry credits	£ 75,353	
	<hr/>	
		£718,403
		<hr/>
Surplus		£122,804

It is only right to say that the previous year showed a deficit of £6,789, but only after the payment of debt charges

and all other expenses. The Finance Committee was able to point out that the "saving to road authorities in consequence of the obligation of the Council to maintain the paving along the tramway routes was estimated at the end of the year under review to be about £233,500 a year for the present mileage," while sums paid to the local authorities for rates on the permanent way amounted in the year to £27,075.

Up to March 1930 the amount of money borrowed in round figures was over £18,000,000, of which over £10,000,000 had been paid back out of revenue.

I hope these figures will satisfy London that the municipally-owned tramway service has not proved such a bad investment for the public. It has, moreover, given the community certain distinct advantages.

First, it has provided a protection against the exploitation of the travelling public by high fares. The combine has drawn into its net most of the other means of transport, but as it could not control the municipally-owned trams it had always to reckon with their competition. Evidence of this is to be found in the fact that where there are tramways twopenny midday fares are allowed by the bus companies, but only in the areas served by trams. Secondly, it provides workmen's fares for early morning travel, a considerable help to the housing problem. Thirdly, it runs an all-night service, which is of great service to printers and other night workers, though it is not a paying proposition.

After this considerable digression from the subject matter of traffic I will return to my narrative.

In 1924 the first Labour Government came into office, early to be followed by an omnibus strike. The combine expressed its willingness to meet the men's demand provided they were freed from needless competition. Out of the

pigeon-holes of the Government department appeared a Bill which had been left behind by the Conservative Government and approved by the persons that controlled the company's affairs.

This Bill, to be known as the London Traffic Act, was pushed through all its stages by a curious combination of Labour and Conservative parties, in spite of the opposition of the Liberal Party, assisted by Mr. Herbert Morrison, afterwards Minister of Transport in the next Labour Government, and a few malcontents. Some of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on London Government were followed. An advisory committee to the Ministry of Transport was set up, known as the London and Home Counties Advisory Committee, covering a very large area and including many quite rural districts. There seemed no very good reason why the boundaries of its operations should stop where they did, except that if they had gone much farther they would have encroached on those great provincial municipal corporations who had learnt the value of self-government, and would have resented interference by a Government department.

The composition of the committee presents certain peculiar features:

The Home Office has one representative. There is a representative of the Metropolitan Police, and another of the City Police. The London County Council has two representatives as against the City's one. Two representatives are selected by the Ministry of Transport from names suggested by the twenty-eight borough councils, and another two from names suggested from the seven counties outside London. One is appointed by the county boroughs in the area. Finally, provision is made for representation of the interests concerned in the transport industry,

two representing Labour, and four representing the business interests providing the means of transport.

It is not surprising that these last four representatives have tended to dominate the committee. But this committee can do little more than give advice, and influence the departments concerned; it has no executive functions.

The real importance of the Act was the right, vested in the Commissioner of Police, to schedule certain routes as restricted streets, and limit the number of omnibuses allowed to run on them. I pointed out in Parliament at the time that this inevitably would be tantamount to giving a monopoly to existing proprietors without payment, and in the light of experience I have proved right. We did get a clause in the Bill to protect the then existing small proprietor; but as I said in the discussions, this might be good for the individual owners as giving them something saleable, but it would only result in their interest being bought out by the combine. This has proved only too true. As the independent omnibus received a licence for a particular route, the combine has come along and bought out the proprietor if it was worth anything. In other words, this Act of Parliament has presented a monopoly value to a metropolitan omnibus licence without payment which it was never intended should attach to a licence to ply for hire.

The promise held out to the public for the passage of this curious Bill was that it would relieve the congestion of the streets and bring prosperity to the industry. Neither of these results seems to have eventuated. Hardly was the Bill on the statute book than the agitation took a new form.

Traffic co-ordination became the great slogan, but behind it all was the desire of the Traffic Combine to get inside its

control all the means of passenger transport, and thus complete its monopoly. The trams were the skeleton at the feast! A skilful agitation was set on foot in the Press and elsewhere in favour of *unified management* as the only cure for all the traffic ills, until the London County Council became inoculated with the disease. The London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee, on which the combine was represented, came out with a proposal on these lines. Finally, the London County Council itself drafted a Bill which it presented to Parliament, proposing to hand over the management of its tramways to its principal competitor, though keeping the ownership and liability for interest on the capital invested in its own hands. An elaborate scheme for the pooling of profits with a slight representation of the public on the board of directors was offered in return for this concession, which was to give to the combine what it had been assiduously working for over a period of years.

It was doomed to disappointment. The Bill had a comparatively smooth passage through the Commons, but an unforeseen thing happened—the Parliament came to an end before it got on the statute book. The General Election changed the composition of the House of Commons, and the new Parliament rejected the Bill.

For twelve months traffic was left alone.

The change of Government in 1929 made a change of policy inevitable at the Ministry of Transport. After a year's thinking the new Minister produced his scheme. I deal with it from a local government point of view in my chapter on Greater London. It certainly presents some novel features. First, it sweeps away all direct association of London local authorities with passenger transport, the very last thing that was to be expected from a Socialist

Government. The London County Council will cease to own and run tramways.

The chief aim of the proposal is the unification of both ownership and management of the passenger transport within a radius of twenty-five miles of Charing Cross, covering no less than 1,846 square miles. The main-line railways are left out, not because it was thought desirable to omit them, but because of the difficulty of adjustment between their main-line and local services. The scheme sets up a Statutory London Passenger Transport Board, composed of some five or seven persons appointed by the Minister of Transport for from five to seven years.

This board, when constituted, is to take over the Metropolitan Railway, the District Railway, the tubes, the omnibuses, and the tramways, both municipal and company, the owners and shareholders of these undertakings being bought out by stock, which they will be required to take in exchange for their financial interests. The capital involved by the proposals exceeds £100,000,000.

The five or six gentlemen who are to manipulate this immense undertaking are to be appointed because of their commercial and business capacity, and they will wield very large powers. They will to all intents and purposes have a complete monopoly; they will be freed from all the irritation of possible competition; they will not have to please shareholders anxious to receive dividends on their shares; nor, like elected councillors, will they have to face angry constituents dissatisfied with the insufficiency of services or the fares charged. The Great Five will sit in Olympian calm while the traffic throbs below. If it comes off it will be an interesting experiment. The board is to be required to make the undertakings pay, which should not be difficult, as it will have a virtual monopoly. Whether

the people who have to travel each day to and from their work will be satisfied is another thing. The British public is proverbially long-suffering, but it does like to grumble. And it seems difficult to believe that the Great Five will be very accessible.

Certain safeguards are to be provided. Local authorities are to be allowed to appeal to the Railway Rate Tribunal for a revision of fares; but as the board will have behind it all the inner knowledge of a complicated system, it will always be able to combat any suggestion that it has been overcharging. It will be difficult to make good a case for reduction, especially as the board can always put in the plea that it is under an obligation to make both ends meet.

The local authorities will have the right to make representation to the board when services are withdrawn or reduced, or when they require new facilities. If they are not satisfied with the treatment received they can complain to the Minister of Transport, who is to refer the matter to the London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee, which is to be reconstituted and strengthened for the purpose. And if the Minister of Transport is satisfied that what is asked for is a commercial proposition, he can order the board to make good the deficiency.

All this sounds very simple, and if the five supermen are discovered willing to give their time and labour to what undoubtedly will be an interesting and important job, it may be a gigantic success.

But seven years is a very short period. No doubt at the first go-off the board, fired with enthusiasm and conscious of the importance of its work, will produce good results. But in due course the five great men may give way to lesser persons: they will meet in private, behind closed doors,

mystery will surround them, and there may be a suspicion that London traffic has become stabilized, and is not quite as efficient as it is, say, in Manchester, Birmingham, or Glasgow, where they still have the old-fashioned municipal management.

No doubt the public will be quite wrong.

But as I write the scheme is still in the melting-pot. Maybe, if it ever takes shape as an Act of Parliament, it will come out in a very different form. Blücher, when he visited London, said: "What a splendid city to sack!" We may equally well say: "What a splendid city to experiment on!" If London had only followed the lines of municipal development of other cities, it might have been allowed to manage its own traffic without the intervention of the Government or of supermen.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman wisely said: "Good government is no substitute for self-government." May we not equally say here: "Efficiency is no substitute for local government"? The English system of local government has been built up, not necessarily because it is always the best way to discharge public services, but because on balance it is best for people to assume responsibility through their representatives for the management of their own affairs.

CHAPTER XII

THE BROAD HIGHWAY

IT is a common practice these days to speak of transport as the main traffic problem. The width of way and the character of the streets are pushed into the background as subjects of minor importance.

If, after the Great Fire, Sir Christopher Wren and John Evelyn had been allowed to carry out their schemes for the replanning of London, the traffic question would have been a much simpler one to-day. The analogy of New York does not hold good because the expansion of that city is restricted by its geographical situation. There the town must grow upwards, and therefore, however wide the streets, there must be congestion. But London is not closed in by any great heights, and the river is not so broad that it cannot be spanned.

If we were to go back far enough we should have to thank the Romans for what still are London's best traffic arteries. To them we owe the Edgware Road, which still follows the route of Watling Street, commemorated to-day by a new London County Council housing estate; while Oxford Street can also claim Roman origin. But the first real London street improvement dates from 1755, when powers were obtained to make a new road "from the Great Edgware Road at Paddington" to the "North End of St. Marylebone"; from thence "to Tottenham Court and Battle Bridge, and thence to Islington and Old Street." In these days this

would be described as a new arterial road, because much of the country through which it was cut was rural in character.

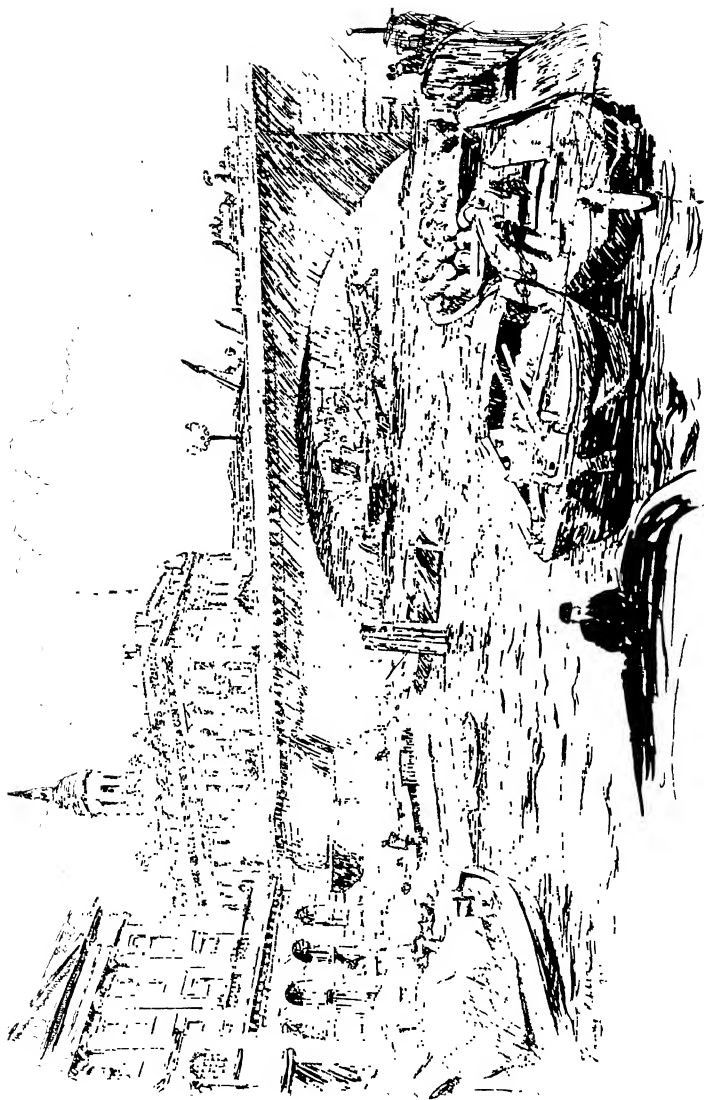
Regent Street and Trafalgar Square were carried out by the Government, no doubt mainly because most of the land was Crown property. And the State to-day is more than rewarded for the wisdom of George IV's ministers by the great increment in values that has accrued to the properties on each side of the street as the ninety-nine-year leases have fallen in.

Many of the great improvements were made possible by the allocation of a great part of the coal and wine duties by Parliament towards the betterment of London. The Metropolitan Board of Works was instigated to carry through many road schemes by having this convenient nest-egg to draw from. Motorists going along Victoria Embankment can feel they are driving over wine and coal. And the same can reasonably be said of Queen Victoria Street, that links up the Embankment with the Mansion House.

By 1888 the proceeds of these duties amounted to no less a sum than £325,000 a year. These duties did for London road improvement in the nineteenth century very much what the petrol duties have done since the war.

But on the initiative of Lord Randolph Churchill in 1886, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, it was decided to drop the source of revenue, and the Act under which the duties were levied lapsed in 1888, in spite of the protests of the Metropolitan Board of Works. The new London County Council that came into being in the following year had to face London road problems unaided by revenue.

One of the most satisfactory street improvements carried through by the old Metropolitan Board was Northumberland Avenue, which, partly because of the few trade interests



LONDON BRIDGE

See pp. 170 and 177

that had to be acquired, and partly because of the fabulous prices obtained for the frontages, actually showed a profit of £119,000 after completion. This, however, was the exception that proved the rule. Street improvements in London are costly affairs. Queen Victoria Street cost over £1,000,000, Shaftesbury Avenue over £700,000, both works carried out by the old board.

In 1866 a Select Committee, presided over by Mr. Ayrton, on the Government of the Metropolis recommended that:

In any arrangement of the financial resources of the Metropolitan Board, a portion of the charge for the permanent improvements and work should be borne by the owners of the property within the Metropolis, the rate being in the first instance paid by the occupier, and subsequently deducted from his rent, as is now provided in regard to general property tax.

The Metropolitan Board of Works embodied this principle in the form of a Bill which it presented to Parliament, but nothing came of it.

Deprived of the proceeds of the wine and coal duties, to the repeal of which it took no exception, the new London County Council pressed forward to establish the principle of betterment.

In 1895 this policy was accepted by Parliament. The greatest street improvement carried through by the London County Council was "Kingsway and Aldwych," which not only provided London with a fine new street in the very centre, going from north to south, but incidentally cleared away some of the worst slum and plague spots in the metropolis. The actual area dealt with covered no less than twenty-eight acres, twelve and a quarter of which were taken up by streets, the balance being available for building operations. A number of years passed before all the property was sold, in fact there are still some vacant plots. But the policy of acquiring land adjacent to the proposed

new streets made it possible to construct the new roadway at a moderate figure, if the situation of the improvement is considered. The gain to London traffic is considerable. Kingsway and Aldwych are one hundred feet wide; and though in the very heart of London, at any time of the day traffic can move along them freely without obstruction, except of course when it reaches cross-roads.

The scheme was completed in 1905. With the one exception of the Victoria Dock Road, now in the course of construction, there has been no great street improvement initiated since that date. Much money has been spent on improvements, but it has mostly taken the form of the widening of existing thoroughfares, such as Piccadilly and the Strand.

Sooner or later, if surface transport is to continue, new streets will have to be constructed. The roads that were all very well for horse-drawn vehicles are obviously quite insufficient for fast-moving motor-cars, especially with the speed limit removed, and their numbers increasing every day.

Before I deal in detail with London bridges some reference is essential to the new arterial roads, constructed mainly outside the county boundary. Though good communication with the outside world is essential to London, in the ordinary way it would not be necessary to make more than a passing reference to these new roads. But in 1921, with the sudden and abnormal increase in the number of unemployed, work had to be found for an emergency army of London men. A hasty conference, summoned at Downing Street by the then Prime Minister, brought about an agreement between the London County Council and the Government to a partnership in the construction of new arterial roads outside the county boundary, and even outside the metropolitan area.

The arrangement was that the London County Council

was to find twenty-five per cent of the cost, in return for the work being done as far as possible by London men engaged through a central Labour Exchange. Except for a small contribution from the local authorities through which the roads passed, the balance of the cost was found by the Government from the Road Fund.

Under the special emergency conditions the Council was justified in finding the money. But London ratepayers in the capacity of taxpayers are large contributors to the Road Fund, and they cannot properly be asked to find money out of rates for roads outside their area, especially if it means curtailing expenditure on street improvements inside their own boundaries. Between 1921 and 1930, under this arrangement, 136½ miles of arterial road have been constructed, only ten miles of which are in London. These roads cost over £6,600,000, of which the London County Council found £1,600,000. This is a strong argument for a Greater London and an extension of boundaries. Meanwhile no number of Traffic Boards will enable the existing streets to carry the vehicles which must use them. Even if omnibus and tramway traffic are pooled there will still be congestion at Hammersmith Broadway and other strategic points. The continuation of Cromwell Road over the District Railway westwards has been recommended by one committee after another; but neither the County Council nor the appropriate Borough Councils are doing more than talk about it. A river embankment from Hammersmith to Chiswick presents a possible new outlet that is worth exploring. But the County Council must be galvanized into action. The authority that made Kingsway without Government help, now that it has the moneys of the Road Fund to call to its aid, must make streets suitable for twentieth-century requirements.

CHAPTER XIII

THAMES BRIDGES

THE early history of metropolitan bridges is centred round London Bridge, which until the eighteenth century was London's only link between the two sides of the river, no doubt due to the limit of the City area and the absence of ordered government outside. Watermen carried on a lucrative trade ferrying passengers across the tideway, right down to the nineteenth century.

Dating back to the tenth century, London Bridge has a romantic story. In the twelfth century the monks of Bermondsey and St. George seem to have enjoyed a considerable revenue from the bridge lands. In addition to tolls, Henry II imposed a special tax on wool for the upkeep of the bridge, while it became a special act of beneficence to make contributions to the fund. Henry III, however, seized the bridge funds and transferred them to the Exchequer, an early precedent for Mr. Churchill's raid on the Road Fund. But this did not endear the king to the City, and when his son came to the throne a court of inquiry was set up, the result of which was that the Corporation of London obtained the fund which it jealously guards to this day.

On 31 March, 1929, nearly £2,000,000 sterling stood to the credit of the fund, some of which money it has been suggested might provide a convenient nest egg to meet some of the heavy expenses of new metropolitan bridges. London had to wait until well into the eighteenth century before another bridge was built. Helped by the Bridge House Estate, the City Corporation built Blackfriars, Southwark, and the Tower bridges all within the City

boundary. Most of the other bridges, including Waterloo, were constructed originally by private enterprise, in return for the right to levy a toll. In fact, London bridges were not made toll-free until as late as 1877. However, Westminster and Chelsea bridges were constructed and maintained by the Government. So long as it had no proper local government, London had to rely on private initiative or State intervention for such obvious necessities as bridges.

On its creation, the London County Council became the London bridge authority outside the City. Like so many London problems, its bridges became the subject of inquiry of numerous committees and Royal Commissions. As long ago as 1854 a Select Committee of the House of Commons was seriously considering the advisability of building new bridges at Horseferry Road, Charing Cross, and St. Paul's, which were seventy-two years later the subject of a recommendation of a Royal Commission.

This commission, under the chairmanship of Lord Lee, rose out of controversy over the future of Waterloo Bridge. Designed by the engineer John Rennie, and constructed by a private company, it was decided by Parliament in 1816 that

whereas the said bridge when completed will be a work of great stability and magnificence, and such works are adapted to transmit to Posterity the Remembrance of great and glorious Achievements, . . . the said Bridge shall be called and denominated the Waterloo Bridge.

Although its magnificence is still generally accepted by persons of æsthetic perception, owing to the peculiar nature of the Thames mud it has lasted little over a century. In 1923 a serious settlement appeared in one of the piers of the bridge. A committee of the London County Council, looking at the problem from a purely utilitarian point of

view, saw in this a good opportunity to sweep the old bridge away and put in its place a modern structure capable of taking six lines of traffic. A storm of protest came from all parts of the country, backed and organized by most of the artistic and learned societies. Regardless of the agitation, the Council proceeded to prepare plans, and no doubt the bridge would have disappeared if the then Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin, had not intervened by the appointment of a Royal Commission with the wider reference of "Cross River Traffic in London," the understanding being that no further action in the direction of the reconstruction of Waterloo would be taken, pending the publication of the report.

Ultimately the St. Paul's Bridge scheme was rejected by Parliament, and has now been dropped by the City. But the chief feature of the Royal Commission was the construction of a great new road bridge at Charing Cross on the route of the present railway bridge. The scheme favoured by the commission was a

double-deck steel bridge, providing space for six railway tracks on the lower or present level with a sixty foot roadway above, [the new bridge] to be built immediately alongside to the east of the present Hungerford Railway Bridge, and a new Charing Cross Station should simultaneously be constructed on a site to be acquired, which is bounded on the east by Buckingham Street.

Both the Government and the London County Council accepted the substance of the report, the former guaranteeing to contribute seventy-five per cent of the ascertained expenditure out of the Road Fund. The County Council then proceeded to associate two distinguished engineers with their own engineer to work out the details of the scheme. However, after prolonged inquiry they brought out a report in favour of an alternative scheme which involved removing Charing Cross Station to another site on

the south side of the Thames, a proposal which had the advantage of being acceptable to the Southern Railway, though it involved an expenditure of £12,000,000. In due course the County Council embodied this proposal in a private Bill which had the backing of the Ministry of Transport. It passed its second reading in the 1930 parliamentary session; but being referred to the Private Bills Committee, it was rejected on the grounds that it was likely to impair the amenities of the Lambeth side of the river, because of the wide viaducts that the scheme would involve. Nothing daunted, the Council decided to reconsider the problem afresh. Various architectural and art societies had objected to the lines of the proposal for many reasons. The Council therefore wisely decided to appoint an advisory committee, on which not only the direct interests concerned were to be represented, but all the various objecting societies as well, under an impartial chairman in the person of Sir Leslie Scott, K.C.

By December 1930 this committee had been already constituted for six months and had not reached a conclusion.

The committee has been snowed under with schemes, and so as to make sure that there is no excuse for turning down the next proposal, each has had to be investigated.

Every other engineer, architect, and town planner seems to have a scheme of his own, for which he is prepared to fight at the expense of all others.

Meanwhile time is slipping by, public enthusiasm for the bridge is cooling off, and there is a real danger of the money allocated by the Government for the purpose from the Road Fund being diverted to other uses.

If London is to have a new Charing Cross Bridge, councillors, architects, artists must sink their differences and come to an agreement.

Bridges cannot be considered as an isolated problem. The mere linking up of two sides of a river may add to the general congestion of traffic. The approaches are of vital importance, and in these days of fast-moving traffic the approach extends a considerable way out, in fact may alter the general line of traffic. New bridges cannot be constructed without new streets. The whole problem of new bridges cannot be divorced from the general replanning of streets in the immediate neighbourhood.

One of the contingencies to be faced from a new Charing Cross Bridge is the throwing of new traffic into the already congested Strand; and though this was to be somewhat overcome by a "roundabout," the attraction of the Roy^a' Commission scheme was that the bridge was to span the Strand, though it was not quite clear how the traffic was to get away once it was over that road.

Compared with other great towns London is very much under-bridged. While London has had only one road bridge over every 2,200 yards of its river, Paris has one across the Seine every 600 yards. The Royal Commission faced this deficiency with imagination. A great new bridge was to be thrown across the river from Southwark on the south side, to be continued on arches until it came out somewhere near the General Post Office. Two other new bridges were to be constructed at the western extremity of London to provide an outlet for a proposed road into the country, ultimately to be linked by a new thoroughfare and bridge over the railway at Cromwell Road. Besides, a number of existing bridges were to be widened and their approaches improved. These schemes together were to cost £27,500,000, probably a low estimate. Whether anything will come of this magnificent programme is problematical. London is not often attracted to great schemes of improvement, but at any rate

it has been set an ideal that is worth striving for. It is significant, however, that the report was unanimous, and it was "designed to form integral and interdependent parts of a general and comprehensive scheme," and there we must leave it.

No chapter on bridges would be complete without some reference to other means of crossing the river. Down below bridges at Woolwich the old Metropolitan Board of Works constructed a ferry, for which it obtained parliamentary powers in 1885, and which was opened in 1889. The ferry is free, and carries a large number of passengers and vehicles, three ferry-boats being employed in the service. But in the winter the lower reaches of the river suffer badly from fog, and it is often necessary to suspend the service for several hours at a time. So the London County Council obtained powers to construct a tunnel at Blackwall, near by, which was opened in 1912. This was a tunnel for both passengers and vehicles, but ten years before, a tunnel for passengers only was opened at Greenwich. At Rotherhithe, much farther up the river, another tunnel was opened as long ago as 1908. This proved a costly affair to construct, owing to the length of the approaches. Tunnels provide a possible alternative to bridges, if the public can be persuaded to burrow underground, and ventilation can be improved. They present one great advantage over bridges: they can be more easily designed to avoid cross-traffic. A good example of this is the Kingsway tram subway, which goes right under the Strand and Holborn. There is no obvious reason why tunnels for motors and passengers should not be used higher up the river, and it is a subject certainly worth exploring. The Thames is tunnelled at several places for railways, and the river bed seems to present no special difficulties.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RIVER

MUCH has been written of recent years on the traffic problem from almost every aspect, but old Father Thames always seems to be ignored. The river is a natural highway. London owes its greatness to its situation on its banks. While roads were bad and infested by highwaymen, the river was the safest way to get from the City of London to Westminster. It was by boat that the "Five Members" fled from Westminster to take refuge in the City to escape the wrath of Charles I. How much the Thames was a highway in the seventeenth century can be learnt from the *Diary* of Pepys, who, writing on 23 August, 1662, describes Queen Catherine's arrival by barge:

Mr. Creed and I walked down to the Tylt Yard and so all along Thames-street, but could not get a boat; I offered eight shillings for a boat to attend me this afternoon and they would not, it being the day of the Queene's coming from Hampton Court. So we . . . walked it to White Hall, and through my Lord's lodgings we got into White Hall garden, and so to the Bowling-greene, and up to the top of the new Banqueting House there over the Thames, which was a most pleasant place as any I could have got; and all the show consisted chiefly in the number of boats and barges; and two pageants, one of a King and another of a Queene, with her Maydes of Honour sitting at her feet very prettily; and they tell me the Queene is Sir Richard Forde's daughter. Anon came the King and Queene in a barge under a canopy with 1,000 barges and boats I know, for we could see no water for them nor discern the King nor Queene. And so they landed at White Hall Bridge, and the great guns on the other side went off.

The Watermen and Lightermen is one of the oldest

craft guilds in the country, dating back to 1350. In 1555 an Act of Parliament conferred on the Thames Watermen and Lightermen's Company the power to regulate their trade, and no one could ply his craft without first taking up the freedom of the company—good evidence of the part played by the Thames in the sixteenth century. Incidentally, though, it was only in 1872 the working watermen and journeyman lightermen obtained representation on the court of the company. It is members of the same guild that steer the tugs and barges up and down the Thames to-day.

Of the Port of London I write elsewhere. Its greatness remains undiminished. It is still the magnet that draws trade to this centre. But as a highway the glory of the river has departed. While the streets are congested and the traffic thunders across the bridges, the river drifts along calm and undisturbed by the new world alongside of it. That has its consolation. Nothing is more comforting to the tired Londoner than to stand on a bridge and throw bread-crumbs to the thousands of gulls that gather over the peaceful waters of the Thames.

For a great part of the day there is scarcely a boat or barge to be seen. Even in the busy hours the traffic on the broad stream is not so great as to impede navigation. Below London Bridge it is another story. In the Pool all is life and bustle, but once the City is left behind, the possibilities of the river as a highway seem to have been forgotten.

For many years a private company successfully ran a service of steamers, but in the eighties, partly no doubt because of the poor character of the boats, they seem to have fallen out of favour. In the nineties the London County Council became interested in the question, and in 1897 they passed a resolution that it was

desirable in the interests of better communication, that steps should be taken to secure an adequate and convenient steamboat service on the Thames.

Attempts were made by the Council in 1901, and again in 1903, to promote a Bill in Parliament, but without success, but in the following year the necessary powers were obtained "to run a service of vessels suitable for the conveyance of passengers and parcels."

The Council in due course put on the river a service of thirty paddle steamers, served by twenty-eight piers. In June 1905 the service was inaugurated with great pomp and circumstance by H. R. H. the Prince of Wales (now King George V) with every promise of success. But conditions worked against the service. The navigation of the river is not easy; it takes time to organize a regular and punctual service on a tidal river; the public had to be educated to use a new form of transport; the following winter proved a bad and foggy one, and the boats did not keep to time-table. Money was lost in the first year of working, which was inevitable in a new service.

In the winter of the following year, before people had had time to acquire the river habit, the service was suspended. One of those wet summers intervened that damp down enthusiasm of any kind and certainly do not favour the river. An election was too good an opportunity to miss. A charge of extravagance had to be substantiated; the boats provided a handy weapon. Pledges were given to abandon the service, with the result that the steamers were sold for a mere song. The capital expenditure incurred amounted to £301,000; the boats were sold for £17,794. Interest had to be paid on the money borrowed just the same, though the boats had been disposed of! Truly a tragic story. Public attention has again been directed to the river, but

from another angle. . Conditions have changed since 1907. The streets are ten times more congested and the difficulties of widening or improving them are much greater. There seems no outlet for goods or passengers from the centre of London except this one. The natural arterial way is the river, and that is the one wide space not congested.

Besides, the paddle steamers of the old service were expensive to run and difficult to handle. The latest idea is a service of small motor boats, or as Mr. A. P. Herbert happily describes them, "water buses," which will no doubt do for the river what the bus has done for the street, reviving some of the glories of the eighteenth century. The river is the finest lung space in the metropolis. A trip down it is a fine tonic for the jaded Londoner. Money is never grudged to a new park. Even if a river service does involve a small charge on the rates, would it not be well spent if it enabled the populace to explore the beauties of the Thames, the wonders of its shipping, as well as the historic buildings on its banks? .

But it is not only for passengers that the river might be more used. It is questionable whether full advantage is taken of it for the conveyance of goods. At present a considerable quantity of bulk cargo is unloaded from the ship-side at the docks, and sent by water to depots upstream. But this is to a great extent for firms who have their own riverside warehouses. Quantities of cargo are sent from the docks through the streets, mostly in slow-moving lorries that hold up other traffic. If large distributing centres were opened up higher up the river conveniently adjacent to the Great Western and Southern railways, and not too far from the new arterial roads, the London streets would be relieved of a considerable amount of traffic and, with the lower costs of warehousing, some

saving in the cost of breaking bulk. The river itself is navigable for many miles, and is linked up with the canal system. The cheapest way of moving timber, building material, coal, and bulky non-perishable goods is by barge; and though considerable use is already made of this means of transport, with a little encouragement and improved facilities much greater advantage might be taken of this fine natural highway.

The Port of London and the Thames Conservancy are the authorities responsible for the river, but local authorities are responsible for the streets, and if some traffic could be taken off the roads the gain would be incalculable.

CHAPTER XV

THE PORT OF LONDON

UP till 1854 the City Corporation had claimed sole control over the bed of the river. In that year an Act of Parliament was passed defining the relation of the City to the Crown, and setting up a new body to manage the river, composed of twelve conservators, half of whom were to be members of the Corporation, the other half to represent Trinity House, the Lord High Admiral, and the Privy Council. In this authority was vested the bed, soil, and shore of the River Thames. From time to time, this Thames Conservancy Board was added to and strengthened, and new powers given to it. In 1866 a subordinate board was appointed to control the upper reaches of the Thames. The Thames Conservancy spent large sums in dredging and providing new moorings, whilst they kept a careful supervision over the deposit of sewage and refuse into the river.

But good work as the board did, it was not a sufficiently powerful body to keep pace with the growing demands of river traffic. In 1894 the Board of Trade appointed commissioners to inquire into the dredging of the Thames between Thorney Creek and the Nore, and as to how the necessary funds could be provided for the work. The commissioners reported in favour of a minimum navigable depth of thirty feet as far as Gravesend; they insisted on the serious competition with which London was faced from places like Southampton, who were maintaining a deeper channel to meet the demands of the newer ships which

every year were being constructed with a greater draught. The expenditure involved was beyond the revenue of the conservators, while the interests concerned did not view with favour an increase in the shipping dues to provide the necessary funds. Meanwhile continental cities, such as Antwerp, Hamburg, and Amsterdam, were making a serious attack on the supremacy of London as a port. Immense sums were being spent by them in modernizing their docks, and many inducements were being offered to shipowners in order to divert from the Thames its great transhipment trade from and to America and the East. The Conservancy might do its best to deepen the channel of the river, but it had no power over the privately-owned docks. In 1900, therefore, a Royal Commission was appointed to survey the whole position of London as a port. After an inquiry extending over two years, they reported that London showed "signs of losing that position relatively to other ports, British and Foreign, which it has held for so long." They advised that £2,500,000 should be spent on deepening the channel, and another £4,500,000 on dock improvements, money which "might fairly be expected to be a productive outlay, and it should be raised by the issue of port stock."

In order to obtain the money on the most favourable terms, the commissioners recommended that "the interest of all the stock issued by the Port Authority for purchase and dock improvements should be guaranteed by the Council and the Corporation."

In 1903 the Government introduced a Bill to give effect to these proposals, but it was not proceeded with. In the following year the London County Council introduced a private Bill, but it was defeated by a large majority. Nothing was done for another three years, when there had been a change of Government, Mr. Lloyd George obtaining office for the first



London County Council

VIEW OF THE THAMES, SHOWING TOWER BRIDGE AND MOTOR
FIRE FLOAT, "BETA III"

See p. 177



London County Council

CHARING CROSS RAILWAY BRIDGE FROM WATERLOO BRIDGE

time. But there had also been a change in the composition of the London County Council, and when the new President of the Board of Trade approached that body and inquired whether they were willing to carry out the recommendations of the Royal Commission and guarantee interest in the stock, to buy out and improve the docks, they refused to have anything to do with it.

Another valuable year therefore was lost, and the matter was becoming so urgent that delay was serious. The following year, Mr. Lloyd George with characteristic energy decided to take the bull by the horns, and as the Council would not co-operate, act independently of it. The scheme that he piloted through Parliament set up a composite authority, seventeen elected by payers of dues and owners of river craft, and one by the wharfingers; four are appointed by the County Council, two each by the City Corporation and the Board of Trade, and one each by the Admiralty and Trinity House. To secure some representation of Labour, provision was made that one of the nominations by the London County Council and the Board of Trade must be made in consultation with organized Labour.

The first chairman was appointed by the Board of Trade, Lord Devonport being selected for the post, and accepting no payment for his services. The authority exercised its right to elect his successor, who gives his whole time to the post and receives a salary.

The Act gave the Port of London Authority powers over the river as far up as Teddington Lock; while to seaward their powers extended fifty-seven miles from London Bridge.

The old dock companies were taken over in return for Port of London stock to the value of £22,362,976.

The history of the docks is interesting. In the old sailing-vessel days ships could lie alongside the open wharves, and

at low tide rest on Thames mud without fear of damage. But valuable cargoes from the West Indies had been subject to constant pilfering, and to meet this nuisance authority was obtained to construct a great wall, to defray the cost of which a monopoly was given to a company to discharge all vessels from the West Indies. This wall dates from 1800, and surrounds the site of the West India Dock.

The London Dock, opened in 1805, received the monopoly of vessels loaded with wine, brandy, tobacco, and rice; shortly afterwards the East India Dock was built, and enjoyed a monopoly of trade from the East Indies. The companies proceeded to utilize their monopolies to extort heavy dues, to the detriment of the traders. As with most public services in the first half of the nineteenth century, Parliament endeavoured to fight the evil of the monopoly by encouraging competition. The preamble of the Bill that created the St. Katherine's Dock laid down the principle "of free competition in trade and without any exclusive privileges and immunities." Companies were encouraged to open up new docks, with the immediate result that the traders benefited by the keen competition for the trade. But soon the companies found themselves in difficulties; they had to pass their dividends, and they became unable to raise the money to carry out necessary improvements to meet the ever-growing demands of the Port of London.

The creation of a dock monopoly made it possible to raise money at a comparatively cheap rate and bring London in line with twentieth-century requirements, while the adequate representation of the users of the docks on the new authority guarantees them from exploitation by excessive rates.

The result of the Act was to bring the whole of the docks under one control. Large-scale dredging operations were

put in hand, which made it possible for the new modern steamers of heavy draught to negotiate its waters.

Great new docks have been constructed on the most improved lines at Tilbury, with every facility for the rapid handling of cargo, as well as a deep-water landing-stage, 1,140 feet long, which will enable passengers to get on board ship independent of the state of the tide.

In spite of a general world depression of trade, the progress of the port has been remarkable. The total net register of tonnage of vessels that arrived and departed with cargoes and in ballast to and from all countries and coastwise was, in 1914, 40,000,000 tons. In 1919 it had dropped to 26,000,000 tons, but the figures have steadily gone ahead each year since, until in 1928 they reached 55,000,000 tons, and in 1929, though a year of bad trade, they had increased to 57,500,000 tons, which does say something for the good name and efficiency of the Port of London.

The total value in 1929 of the imports and exports of the United Kingdom came to £2,000,000,000. No less than £700,000,000 of this trade came through London, Liverpool being a bad second with £470,000,000, though it is the centre of the cotton trade and is near the coal industry, besides being an Atlantic port with a fast American mail service. London has a reason to be proud of its port; and some at least of its success must be attributed to the good work of the men who serve it at the Port of London Authority.

CHAPTER XVI

PARKS, GARDENS, AND SQUARES

THE visitor to London has heard so much of the slums and chimney-pots that he is surprised to find so many gardens and delightful green places scattered about the town. In spite of soot and dirt the London green is wonderful. There is nothing quite like it. Whether it is that the grass likes the soot, or whether it is something in the character of the London clay, when the grass does grow and it is not suffocated by lack of light and air, there is nothing to compare with it in any other great city.

First, London has to thank the Crown for the greatest of its parks. St. James's Park dates back to Henry VIII, who walled in the land for his own pleasure and profit, so that he could indulge in jousts and sports near his new Palace of Whitehall when he took it over from Wolsey. But it was not until Charles II that it assumed something of its present character. The Merry Monarch did not indulge in sport, but amused himself in the Park of St. James's. He opened up the grounds and converted them into a pleasant garden. What had been a number of small ponds and marshy grounds he had canalized and made into a lake, besides making a decoy for ducks. There is much mention of this park in Pepys's *Diary*:

To Whitehall . . . and then to walk in St. James's Park and saw a great variety of fowle which I never saw before.

Evelyn, too, refers to it:

I went to St. James's Parke, where I saw various animals and examined the throate of the *Onocrotalus* or Pelican, a fowle between

a Stork and a Swan; a melancholy water-fowl brought from Astracan by the Russian Ambassador, it was diverting to see how he would toss up and turn a flat fish, plaice, or flounder, to get it right into its gullet at its lower beak, which being filmy stretches to a prodigious wideness when it devours a great fish. Here was also a small water-fowl no bigger than a more-lieu, that went almost erect like the penguin of America; it would eat as much fish as its whole body weigh'd, I never saw so unsatiable devourer, yet the body did not appear to swell the bigger. The Solan Geese here are also greater devourers, and are said soon to exhaust all the fish in a pond. . . . The Parke was at this time stored with numerous flocks of severall sorts of ordinary and extraordinary wild fowle, breeding about the Decoy, which for being neere so great a City, and among such a concourse of souldiers and people, is a singular and diverting thing.

The tradition still remains. Pelicans, herons, wild duck of many species, have been brought to the St. James's Park lake, and no pleasanter spot can be found, though it is within a minute or two of Government offices and close by the Houses of Parliament.

Hyde Park dates from Henry VIII. Originally marshy ground intersected by the Tyburn and the West Bourne, it formed part of the manor attached to the Abbey of Westminster. On the confiscation of the Abbey land by the king it became Crown property and a deer forest; it must have been something like Richmond Park is to-day. During the Revolution it lost much of its character; some of the land was let for farms; it was used at times for mobilizing troops, and the populace overran a great part of it.

After the Restoration the land was walled in, but the public seem to have acquired a right of access which was gradually extended. Queen Caroline, the consort of George II, did much to popularize the Park.

On the northern side were a number of ponds and stagnant pools fed by the West Bourne. The queen, out of her private purse, spent some £20,000 in converting them into a lake, and in order to preserve the rural character of the landscape, had it constructed in an irregular shape. The eighteenth

century was much attached to the formal garden, and landscape gardeners adhered to straight lines in any ornamental waters that they designed. This Hyde Park lake came, therefore, to be known as the Serpentine, a name still adhered to, though it is in real danger of being changed to "Lansbury's Lido." As a matter of fact it has been used for bathing for the last half-century, but Mr. Lansbury, as Commissioner of Works, for the first time in 1930 permitted mixed bathing, and by fencing in part of the ground made sun-bathing possible.

Right through the nineteenth century Hyde Park, in certain times of the year, was the centre of fashion. During the "Season" the carriage drive—the road inside the Park railings on the south side—was crowded with carriages, smart equipages, in which ladies displayed themselves in their finery to their mutual pleasure. The carriage block was one of the sights of London. All this has disappeared with the advent of the motor; for a time these were not allowed to enter the Park, until recently there was a speed limit of ten miles an hour; in 1924 the ban on hackney carriages, taxis, and cabs was lifted. But the social side is still preserved in Rotten Row, the only place left in London for horse-riding.

At the end of Hyde Park, separated only by some low railings, are Kensington Gardens, part of the park attached to Kensington Palace, constructed by William of Orange, though much added to since then. Hyde Park consists of $363\frac{3}{4}$ acres, Kensington Gardens of $274\frac{1}{2}$ acres. To have 638 acres right in the heart of London is an immense benefit, perhaps hardly enough appreciated by the people in the immediate neighbourhood. But Hyde Park is only separated from St. James's Park by a road, and here you have another 145 acres. It can be fairly said that in

these royal parks London has a continuous open stretch of country of 783 acres.

Regent's Park has rather a different origin. It was formed out of Crown demesne let to the Duke of Portland, the lease of which expired in 1811. The Crown obtained parliamentary powers to form out of this land a park, and to let the adjoining land on building leases. John Nash planned the lay-out, and was responsible for most of the design of the terraces of houses that surround the park. They provide an attractive feature, especially as a provision in the original leases holds that their stucco fronts should be painted once in four years a uniform colour, which secures a uniformity quite foreign to most of London street architecture. The Prince Regent, afterwards George IV, had a house on the north-east side of the park; it was partly to link this up with Carlton House, his town residence, that Regent Street was planned.

The whole of the park was not opened to the public. Certain privileges were given to the occupants of the adjoining houses, while two sites were let to two private societies, the Zoological Society, which has provided London with its Zoo, and the Royal Botanic Society, whose gardens occupy the inner circle. The latter is in danger of losing its lease on its termination this year.

Hyde Park, St. James's Park, Regent's Park, and Greenwich Park are all under His Majesty's Commissioner of Works, a Minister of the Crown, and the cost of their maintenance is found out of national funds. In these days Richmond Park, another royal park, though out of the County of London might well be included as a London park, as during week-ends and holidays it is crowded with Londoners who get there easily by motor bus. The same could be said of Kew Gardens, established in 1760 as

gardens to the Palace of Kew; in 1840 they became National Botanic Gardens for plant experiment. Until comparatively recently a charge was made for admission, but now the gardens are open to the public and provide a fine recreation ground of great beauty. The grounds contain numerous hot-houses and conservatories, a museum and a pagoda.

These royal parks are one of the advantages that London enjoys from being the capital city; the general taxpayer pays for something that in the provinces would have to be paid wholly out of the local rates.

The parks and gardens under the London County Council cover a considerable area.

The East End open space is Victoria Park, and was bought by the State before there was any properly constituted authority for London. Bought in 1844 out of moneys obtained from the sale of old York House, the Act of Parliament which authorized its purchase vested it in the Crown, with a proviso that it should bear the queen's name.

Kennington Park was formed out of the common land attached to the Manor of Kennington, which forms part of the hereditary estates of the Prince of Wales. The common had become waste land and the dumping ground of tin cans and rubbish; permission, therefore, was given in 1852 to enclose the land by railings and to convert it into a park. It was not, however, until as late as 1887 that these two parks were handed over by the Crown to the Metropolitan Board of Works. Meanwhile that authority, under the pressure of public opinion, had acquired a number of open spaces especially adjacent to the overcrowded districts; Southwark Park, adjoining Bermondsey and Southwark, being bought as long ago as 1864.

But there was another way that London acquired many of its splendid open spaces. In and around London still survived a considerable quantity of common land that had escaped the Enclosure Acts. Many persons claimed ancient common rights, and whenever any attempt was made to tidy up any of them, they swooped down with claims for compensation. On the other hand, the Commons Preservation Society claimed that as the commons could not be enclosed, the public had rights of access, and no claim for compensation arose. The issue was finally settled by a Parliamentary Select Committee that supported the view of the Preservation Society, finally embodied in 1866 in the Metropolitan Commons Act, which forbids the enclosure of any common land in the metropolitan area. In this way, Blackheath, Clapham Common, and Tooting Bec came under the Board of Works. But in many cases the lords of the manors put up a stout resistance to parting with their rights, and in some cases a special Act of Parliament had to be passed before the land could be vested in the public.

There is no more popular resort for Londoners than Hampstead. The bank holiday fair is an institution that draws tens of thousands from all the poorer parts of the town. But a considerable struggle had to be put up before the rights of the public were established. In fact it was only in 1871 that the manorial rights were extinguished, and only after a sum of £45,000 had been paid to the interests concerned.

The good work of the Metropolitan Board has been continued by the London County Council. But every year it becomes more and more difficult to find unbuilt-on land, though the demand is increasing at an even greater rate than the population. The shorter working day, the introduction of Summer Time, and the growing popularity of

organized games, increase the pressure on all available open spaces. The London County Council occasionally acquired parks outside the county boundary, though there seems to be rather a natural reluctance by the present Council to repeat the experiment, for fear that outside authorities should shift their responsibilities on to their wealthy neighbour. One of the finest examples of a London-owned park outside its area is Marble Hill Park, Twickenham, which was acquired partly to preserve the magnificent view from Richmond Hill. The London County Council has more than doubled the area of the parks and commons under its control since it became responsible in 1889, the total area now being not far short of 6,000 acres.

The City Corporation has played a noble part in preserving land from the builder. If all their money had been so wisely spent there would be few to cavil at their privileges. Epping Forest, the common rights over which were acquired by the City in 1882 for close on £300,000, is a beautiful demesne containing some of the finest oak trees in the country, and covering over 5,500 acres. It is only a few miles out of town, and yet in a comparatively few minutes from the edge of the wood a visitor can lose himself in almost pristine forest.

The following year the City bought out the common rights of several other popular resorts, including Coulsdon Common, and in particular Burnham Beeches, five hundred acres of beautiful woodland some twenty miles away in the county of Buckingham.

All the borough councils have bought at various times land for public gardens, and though there are a very large number of them, their total area only amounts to little over four hundred acres. Sometimes it is an old churchyard they have converted into a pleasant garden; other times it

is a square that they have saved from the builder's hands; they are symbols of the desire to preserve every possible green spot for the public enjoyment. Which brings me to what is perhaps the most interesting phase of London's open spaces.

The squares have been one of the features that have distinguished London from other towns. New York may have its broad streets, Paris its boulevards, but London has its squares. This most attractive form of town-planning commenced about the seventeenth century with the migration of the great families from the City and the neighbourhood of the Strand.

St. James's Square was made out of St. James's Fields, which the Earl of St. Albans obtained from the king in fee simple in order to build "houses fit for noblemen to dwell in and other persons of quality." This square has been very little changed in its character; it still retains its sombre and dignified eighteenth-century appearance. But few of the "noblemen and other persons of quality" are still living there; a bank, an insurance office, an estate agent, one or two clubs, the Institute of International Affairs, and such dignified institutions, have taken their place.

Leicester Square and Bloomsbury Square date from the same period. These squares were such a success that they inspired the lay-out of the adjacent lands, which with the migration westwards were being rapidly developed.

But the outstanding example of this form of town-planning is to be found in the Bedford Estate, developed in the first half of the nineteenth century. Bloomsbury, now becoming a university quarter, is made delightful by the garden squares with which it is intersected.

But the first creators of London squares do not seem to have contemplated an ordered garden, and there was

no provision for their maintainance. The preamble of a special Act in 1726, for an improvement of St. James's Square, points out that:

Whereas a great square Place or piece of Ground called by the name of St. James's Square . . . doth now lie and hath for some years lain rude, waste, uncleanly and in great Disorder . . . and the said Inhabitants are much dissatisfied with the ill condition of the said square, and are desirous to clean repair, adorn and beautify the same in a becoming and graceful Manner, and humbly pray that an adequate contribution may be for that purpose raised by and amongst themselves.

This Act set up trustees with the power to levy a rate on all the householders round the square. This formed a precedent for a number of similar Acts of Parliament, all of which provided for trustees or commissioners to make them effective.

There was nothing particularly novel in vesting these kinds of duties in commissioners. As I have pointed out elsewhere, owing to the absence of any ordered form of local government in London outside the City before 1855, the general way to secure public works was through commissioners. But though the Metropolis Management Act, 1855, transferred the duties vested in commissioners for the maintenance of ordinary streets to the new vestries, it specially exempted those in the hands of bodies looking after enclosed gardens or ornamental grounds "for the use of the inhabitants of any Square, Crescent, Circus, Street, or Place." The change in character of many parts of London towards the end of the nineteenth century has threatened the existence of the squares. The business quarter has been steadily pushing westwards. Stately dwelling-houses of merchant princes have been converted into offices for architects and lawyers, or even diverted to baser purposes. Land values have been rising steadily, and owners have

cast covetous eyes on the gardens in the squares as potential building sites. How serious was the threat to one of London's most treasured possessions was brought home to the public by what has come to be known as "the battle of Edwardes Square." In 1904 the London County Council introduced a Bill to protect it, but so stout was the opposition of the House of Lords that it had to be withdrawn. But nothing daunted by the failure of the Council, a few of the adjacent householders resisted the right of the purchasers of the freeholds to cover the open space with buildings, and successfully fought an action right up to the House of Lords. The proceedings in this case dragged on over a considerable period, but it served to draw public attention to the whole question. An attempt was made by the London County Council to persuade the ground landlords to undertake to keep these garden squares unbuilt on. In 1906 the Council did get a Bill through Parliament preserving sixty-seven squares that the owners had agreed to have scheduled. But this was a very small percentage of the total, and provided a stimulus to some owners to put their land on the market in anticipation of legislation.

How urgent is the need for more legislation in London to preserve its garden squares is evidenced by the building on two great garden spaces, Mornington Crescent and Endsleigh Gardens. The loss of these two sites disturbed public opinion enough to cause the appointment of a Royal Commission on London Squares, whose report, issued in 1928, makes most interesting reading. They advised immediate legislation if the squares were to be safeguarded. There was a difference of opinion on the question of compensation, a minority claiming that, protected by immemorial custom, these lands should be treated as commons. But the majority took the other view; and though in some

cases the public could show proprietary rights, there were many others where the owners could prove undisputed title to dispose of them as they willed. It is estimated that if passed this will entail a liability of £6,000,000. But whether this claim be a just one or not, it is worth a goodly sum to preserve for London for all time these garden squares.

Some of them may be a bit dingy: there are too many laurel bushes and too little grass; some of the railings might well be removed; but they are lung spaces, and provide a welcome relief from the noise and crowd of the over-congested streets. Once they are preserved from the builder's hands, then the next step will be to beautify them, pull down the ugly iron barriers, and bring into them sunshine and the jolly children from the streets.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PUBLIC SERVICES: WATER, GAS, ELECTRICITY, AND MARKETS

WATER

THE most important municipal necessity is good water. The first attempt to provide a proper public supply in London dates back to 1236, when the City got powers to make conduits to take water from Tyburn to the City "for the profit of the City and the good of the whole realm thither repairing, to wit, for the poor to drink and the rich to dress their meat."

From time to time other conduits were constructed, but no charge was made for the use of water for ordinary household purposes. It was not till 1580 that there was any idea of turning to profit the need of the community for good water. In that year an ingenious device for utilizing wheels worked by the rushing waters through the arches of London Bridge was invented by a Dutchman, Peter Morris: he was granted the monopoly of so pumping up water to the higher levels.

By 1606 the demands of London for water so increased that Parliament granted to the City Corporation the power of taking water from springs in the county of Hertford. Instead of the Corporation exercising these powers themselves, they granted them by deed to one Hugh Myddelton, who inaugurated the system known as the New River. It was not, however, until 1723 that a series of waterworks along the banks of the River Thames were set up. From

that time onwards, for a hundred years, charter after charter was given to various companies with powers over ill-defined and often conflicting areas. Parliament seemed to have no idea of granting monopolies, but looked rather to competition to protect the public both as to quality and price. But the companies concerned found competition both wasteful and unprofitable, and by 1821 this one protection to the public had been eliminated by working arrangements and the division of territories between the various companies.

Complaints were numerous, and a series of commissions and committees were appointed. Ravages of cholera made the question acute, and in 1851 Sir George Grey brought in a Government measure to hand over the water companies' works to a board, but the Bill never got beyond its second reading. In 1852 something was done to regulate the quality of the supply by the Metropolis Water Act, which prohibited drawing water below Teddington Lock. There were many other regulations in the Act, but they were not stringent enough to be effective, so a Royal Commission was appointed to report on the whole subject of a proper supply of water for London. The commission declared that

no trading company could be permitted to levy or expend . . . rates, that therefore the future control over water supply should be entrusted to a responsible public body with powers conferred on them for the purchase and extension of existing works.

This commission was presided over by no less a person than the Duke of Richmond; notwithstanding, nothing was really done to carry out its recommendations. Sir William Harcourt presided over a committee in 1880, which reported that it was

. . . expedient that the supply of water to the Metropolis should be placed under the control of some public body.

And yet, when the London County Council came into existence in 1889, the companies still reigned supreme in London.

In 1891 we actually have the County Council and the City Corporation coming together and devising a scheme for joint action; but the Bill thus promoted did not get through the Select Committee of Parliament.

Meanwhile Lord Ridley presided over a Committee of Parliament which advised that the London County Council should become the responsible water authority, and should be empowered to promote legislation to purchase, either by themselves or in conjunction with outside persons, the company undertakings. The County Council, however, objected to some of the vital recommendations of the committee, especially to the provision that the Council

if constituted the water authority, should be required to purchase the undertakings of the eight water companies by agreement, or failing agreement, by arbitration.

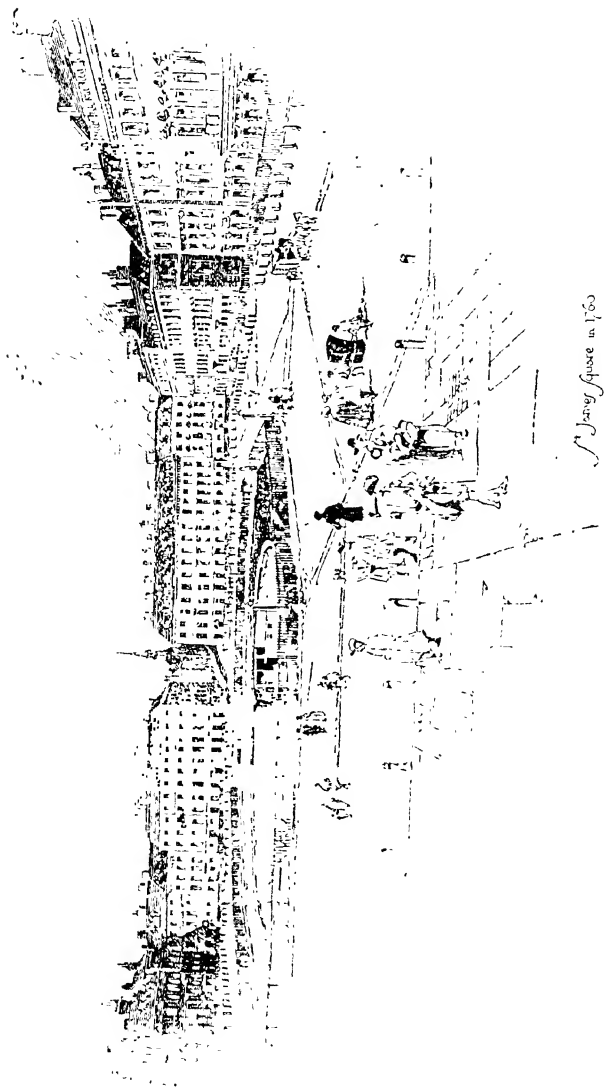
On the other hand, they endorsed the recommendations of Sir William Harcourt's committee, that the companies should be acquired "if the same could be obtained on fair and reasonable terms." The Council further contended that the price should not depend merely

on past dividends or on Stock Exchange values, but on the true value of the undertaking, having regard to its legal position and liabilities, to the condition of the property and to its ability to supply future wants.

For ten years the settlement of the question was delayed. Bills were promoted by the Council, conferences were held, and commissions of inquiry were appointed; what was apparently a simple, straightforward problem Parliament seemed incapable of solving. Their main desire appeared to protect the interests of the shareholders, while London's

municipal authority did not want to pay more for a municipal supply than its real value. It was not until 1902 that legislation was placed on the statute book. The Bill incurred the strenuous opposition of the County Council; the constitution of the board was objected to, both as cumbersome and because it did not secure proper public control. Besides, the financial provisions were considered far too favourable to the companies, who had had inserted into the original Bill amendments providing that the value of the undertakings should be determined on the basis of the Land Clauses Consolidation Acts, as well as for compensation to the directors for loss of office. London had to pay heavily for its water, mainly because of the senseless delay by Parliament in deciding on the method of municipalization. When the Stock Exchange got possession of the fact that the Government did intend to create some kind of ownership, the value of the shares was enhanced, and the public had to pay accordingly. Far more was paid for the undertakings than they were worth to the community; London is saddled for all time with an expensive water system: expensive not because of the high cost of construction, but because of the high price paid for compulsory purchase.

The board consists of representatives nominated by the London County Council and all the adjoining counties, the metropolitan borough councils, the City Corporation, and by a joint committee representing urban district councils; by this means a composite body of sixty-six was created. Should the charges it is empowered to levy prove insufficient, it can levy a rate, and so large has had to be the expenditure of the board in bringing the water system up to date, that every year a deficiency has to be made up out of the general rates. The public is now inclined to speak disparagingly of this municipal undertaking, but it must be remembered



St. James's square in 1760

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE IN 1760

that its finances were handicapped by having to take over a system at far more than it was worth. So long as the board is elected by indirect methods, and represents so many varied authorities, it can by no means pretend to be in touch with the needs and requirements of the public it caters for.

For the year 1929 the domestic water rate levied was on the basis of $5\frac{3}{4}$ per cent on rateable value, and the charges for metred surplus were $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per 1,000 gallons. It was expected from the figures available that the operations of the board based on these charges would show a deficiency of £13,000, but owing to the exceptional drought there was an approximate deficiency of no less than £288,226. To meet this loss, the charges for the year ending March 1931 were increased to $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. In his annual report to the board for the year ending March 1930, the Director of Water Examination points out that Londoners might be said to be drinking lake water, and

that the 49 lakes are artificial, and are called storage reservoirs, and further they are fed from sources which are not free from considerable criticism. Nevertheless, if the hand of man had played no part in their construction, and if instead of being separated, they had been united to form one vast sheet of water covering over 2,700 acres and holding 20,000,000,000 gallons, the impression of security thus created would have been of a very material kind. The Director ventures to suggest that such a feeling of safety is not misplaced under the existing conditions, as the policy of the Water Board is definitely in favour of equalization of storage, so far as this is reasonably practicable.

The Metropolitan Water Board serves a population of close on 7,500,000 people at the rate of over thirty-six gallons per head per day. There is little complaint about the quality of the water supplied, and no doubt London's freedom from serious epidemics, and its low death-rate, must to some extent be attributed to the purity and abundance of its water.

GAS

The history of London's gas supply is very much the same as that of the rest of London's services. Starting in 1810, the present Gas Light and Coke Company was the first to receive powers, but in 1830 other companies received similar rights. As the use of gas became general some regulation was necessary, and it was proposed to define the respective areas of the different companies in order to protect the consumer and regulate the price. But the companies vigorously opposed Government interference with their methods of business as an infringement on the sacred rights of property. Parliament took the only other alternative and threw open the supply to competition. For the twenty years after 1830 the public obtained its gas-supply at a cheap rate, but it paid dearly for this privilege. When the streets were not dug up for water they were for gas. At the same time the cut-throat competition of the various companies made a disastrous inroad into their profits. And, as is generally the case when public services are left to open competition, by 1850 working agreements had been made between the various companies to limit their operations to special areas. These arrangements proved so profitable to the companies that they became general, with the natural result that prices rose. The companies divided up London between them, and by 1857 they were refusing to submit competitive prices for street lighting. Not only were the prices high, but the quality was poor. There was no central authority to speak for London, and the companies successfully resisted, with the help of their gigantic funds, every attempt to regulate their supply. A Bill was passed in 1860 introducing the principle of the price of gas varying in an

inverse ratio to the dividend. But the Bill was so amended and altered in Committee through the efforts of the companies, which the want of any central body to speak for the consumer made it difficult to counteract, that by the time it became law it offered little protection to the public. The new Act really helped the companies, as it recognized the working arrangement and legalized their monopolies. Dissatisfaction with the legalization of 1860 was general, and several parliamentary committees reported in favour of its amendment. But every attempt to amend the law was met by the strenuous opposition of the companies. Sir Stafford Northcote, as President of the Board of Trade under a Conservative Government, introduced in 1867 a moderate amending measure, which was violently attacked by the companies concerned. Meanwhile the discontent of the consuming public was growing, and so strong was it that in 1866 the City Corporation presented a Bill seeking powers to supply its own gas, and though nothing came of it, they managed to get an effective measure through in 1868. Its operation, however, was confined to the City area.

The gas companies then proceeded to promote their own private Bills; but Parliament insisted, in every concession granted them, upon the insertion of clauses making the dividends vary inversely to the price of gas, and upon proper provision being made for the testing of its quality.

Until 1914 this system was found to be quite satisfactory, both to the users and the producers of gas. The war, however, disturbed industrial conditions; the price of gas rose, and the dividends fell accordingly.

By 1918 the dividends had fallen so low that the gas undertakings applied to Parliament for relief, and the Statutory Undertakings (Temporary Increase of Charges)

Act was passed, enabling the Board of Trade to grant an order permitting any gas undertaking to pay a minimum dividend equal to three-quarters of the standard dividend, or three-quarters of the pre-war rate, whichever was the lower, irrespective of the prevailing price of gas, and the sliding scale was suspended. This Act remained in force for two years.

In 1920, at the instigation of the Board of Trade, the Gas Regulation Act was passed, which enabled the board, on application by an undertaking or the local authority, to vary the standard prices by means of an order. The Council availed itself of this machinery, and between the years 1923 and 1926 was successful in obtaining a revision of the standard prices of all the gas companies supplying London, with the exception of one to which the method was not applicable.

Since the war, the various companies supplying London have secured, by means of private Acts, a minimum dividend of five per cent on their ordinary stock, irrespective of the price of gas. The effect is the virtual abolition of that part of the sliding scale which operated to reduce dividends below the standard when selling prices exceeded the standard price.

The 1920 Act also introduced the thermal system of charging for gas. Hitherto the method of charging for volume alone did not take quality into consideration, whereas the new system charges only for heat, provided that the gas is maintained up to the required standard. The consumer is safeguarded by the existence of permanent testing places, where the gas is tested daily by qualified examiners appointed by the London County Council.

But the real security to the public against any exploitation by the gas companies is the competition of electricity, which now is available almost everywhere. The gas companies

are only too anxious to obtain business, and every inducement is offered to householders and traders to use gas for light and heat. Where an alternative is capable of being used, the need for protection from a monopoly is sensibly reduced.

ELECTRICITY

Parliament had learnt a lesson from its experience with water and gas. When the progress of invention made it necessary to initiate legislation for electricity, every provision was made to protect the public interest.

The first Act dates back to 1882, and empowers the Board of Trade to grant a provisional order to either a local authority or a company to supply electricity, the order being conditional on the approval of Parliament. But so anxious was Parliament to prevent the repetition with electricity of what had happened with the other services, that it gave the local authorities the right of buying out a company after twenty-one years. This period was too short to make it worth while for a company to initiate an undertaking, and in 1888 it was extended to forty-two years. Care was taken, however, to provide that the public was only to pay for the actual value of the plant: nor did the law allow anything to be paid to the shareholders for compulsory purchase or loss of profits.

In the provinces most of the municipalities applied for powers to run their own generating stations. But in London the old vestries were the authorities, and it is not surprising that they were generally willing to leave the work to private enterprise. With the creation of borough councils more municipal plants were put down: fifteen boroughs ran their own supply. Fourteen companies supplied the rest of London.

In electricity, as in so many other matters, the policy of ignoring the unity of London proved expensive. Not that Parliament could be blamed. When the vestries were made the units electricity was in its infancy, and the Government was supported by its experts in encouraging the creation of many generating stations. But the progress of electrical science has been rapid; it has been manifestly proved that the larger the generating station, the greater the quantity of power that can be disposed of, the less the cost of production. London therefore offers infinite possibilities for cheap electricity. Accepting the law of diminishing costs with increasing supply, London, the largest urban area in the world, should provide unlimited scope for economical production.

By the close of the nineteenth century electricity had become an important element in industry; but early legislation contemplated, as the titles "Electric Lighting Acts" indicate, that lighting was the main function of electricity. The needs of an industrial London have made electricity for power more of a necessity than for illumination. But the fifteen municipal and the fourteen company services had their interests to be safeguarded; and the problem has been how to respect their autonomy and yet provide cheap power. From 1898 onwards a number of business men spent large sums of money in endeavouring to obtain from Parliament powers to provide London with a bulk supply. In 1905 there were actually eight Bills before Parliament. One of these schemes contemplated the supply of electricity in bulk to authorities in and around London over an area of five hundred square miles, and where the present suppliers would not come to terms, it proposed giving the right of competition with them. The Bill met with the strenuous opposition of both the London County Council and the

local authorities, who saw in the scheme an attempt to create a gigantic trust. In spite of this opposition the Bill went through the House of Lords, and reached a second reading in the House of Commons, and only pressure of business prevented it going further.

The next year, 1906, the London County Council introduced a Bill of its own for a central municipal supply. That and a company's Bill were sent before a Select Committee of the Commons. Although they did not accept the Bill of the County Council, they reported:

The best means of providing for the supply of electrical energy in bulk and for power motive purposes is by one large and inclusive scheme, not only over the entire County of London, but the adjoining boroughs and districts. For the purpose of carrying out such a scheme some central authority is required with ample statutory powers and corresponding duties.

In addition to the proposal of the London County Council various other proposals have been placed before the Committee. After giving full consideration to this question, the Committee are of opinion that the London County Council should be this authority.

But parties at the London County Council were by no means agreed as to their attitude to this proposal. On the one hand, the majority favoured a company under public control, being entrusted with bulk supply, and stigmatized a municipal scheme as Socialism; while, on the other hand, the Progressives pointed out the danger of any one company being allowed to exploit such a large enterprise, which savoured of a trust, and might be used, as in America, against the interests of the general public, however stringent the State regulations. But something had to be done. In 1908 Parliament endeavoured to meet the case by passing a Bill enabling suppliers to link up their systems, in the hope that this would lead to a central generating station. Only two boroughs took advantage of this power, and there were two arrangements between companies. But there was one

clause in this Act that was to prove of great importance. The London County Council replaced the borough councils as the purchasing authority of the company undertakings in 1931.

The need for cheap electricity for industrial purposes was growing every day. One of the peculiarities of industrial London is the countless number of small factories. In most other parts of England industries are on a comparatively large scale, and they were therefore in a position to use steam plant or generate their own power. But the only chance these small London industries had of holding their own with their continental competitors was to buy cheap electrical power. Constant complaints were reaching the County Hall of the high price asked for industrial electricity. Legislation was necessary, but the Council could not make up its mind as to the best line of advance. The London County Council therefore set up a special Electricity Committee, and engaged the services of a firm of engineers to act as their technical advisers. Not only was evidence taken from places like Manchester and Glasgow in this country, but engineers were invited over from the United States of America and Germany. An immense amount of information was collected, and the result of the inquiry was embodied in a remarkable report that was published early in 1914. One or two passages of that report are worth quoting, because they still more or less hold good:

In order to be able to supply electricity at a price low enough to ensure its adoption for all purposes it is not sufficient merely to employ the most efficient means of production and distribution. A still greater reduction in the selling price must and can be effected by improving the "load factor," i.e. by employing the same plant and mains for a longer period each day and hence producing a greater output with the same capital outlay. As the storage of electricity on a very large scale is impracticable, improvement of load factor has to be effected by increasing the variety of the demands supplied from one system.

The supply of a number of different lighting undertakings from one system instead of from many will produce a comparatively small improvement in load factor because the maximum load—which mainly governs capital outlay—occurs about the same period in most of the districts in the London area.

The addition of a traction and power load effects a further improvement due to there being throughout the day a larger demand for traction and power than for lighting. But the greatest improvement in load factor—at least in the near future—will be obtained from the addition of a cooking and heating load, the former of which is well distributed throughout the year. . . .

There are several reasons why the development of electric heating should grow in London more rapidly than in many other capitals, the chief of which is the comparatively small amount of heat required in the English climate.

The amount of heat necessary to warm a building in cities where the external temperature is for considerable periods very low, is so great that the only practicable scheme at present is to burn coal or coke on the spot—neither gas nor electricity can compete in cost. In London, however, the average winter temperature being higher, the amount of heat required is much smaller and consequently any difference in cost between electricity and other forms of heating is more often counterbalanced by the convenience, cleanliness, and saving in domestic service resulting from electric heating.

Fundamentally, to obtain the highest load factor of general supply involves the use of electricity for as many of the citizens' daily needs as possible, as these obviously do not arise simultaneously. The early morning cooking, transportation to the place of business, the warming or lighting of the workshop or office, the return journey and the evening cooking, heating and lighting, would utilize the plant for a large part of the twenty-four hours. . . .

The conditions in London are such as to make it one of the finest fields for electric supply in the world, and it should have the best and cheapest supply of any great city. Fuel can be delivered on the lower Thames at a comparatively low figure; the river supplies ample water; the demand is that of the largest and wealthiest city in the world; and the diversity of demand is very great. The economy of distribution mainly depends on the density of the load, which in London is greater than that of any area in the world. Finally, London's credit and ability to raise capital are unrivalled.

I make no apology for quoting such lengthy extracts. It has sometimes been spoken of as the "£1000 report," because of the big fee paid for it. Certainly it puts in an attractive form the advantage of uniformity and

large-scale production and distribution. But alas, the war intervened, and the whole question was left in a state of suspended animation.

Incidentally there has been comparatively little development in the use of electricity in London for heating and cooking, no doubt due partly to the inherent conservatism of the London housewife, and partly to the energy and skill with which the gas companies have wooed her favour, and partly because in most parts of the metropolis prices have failed to come down to a level which competes with coal, coke, gas, and oil.

This same report recommended the London County Council to promote a Bill in Parliament setting up a central body with powers of bulk supply, and the means of gradually acquiring and amalgamating the different undertakings on commercial terms into one great concern.

No doubt something on these lines would have been carried out if it had not been for the intervention of the Great War. The Government was not unmindful of the urgency of the problem, not only in London, but throughout the country. Even before the cessation of hostilities the Board of Trade set up a committee, known after its chairman as the Williamson Committee, which reported as early as April 1918.

They pointed out that electrical legislation in the past had been "too parochial," that it had "allowed even adjacent undertakings to establish works differing not only in type of plant and mains but also in frequencies, with the result that linking up and centralization of power is now extraordinarily difficult and costly."

They went on to say:

. . . that it has been conclusively proved that a Municipal or Local Government area is not necessarily, and in fact is rarely, the most economical area of electrical supply.

They recommended the appointment of Electrical Commissioners at substantial salaries: that engineering qualifications and business experience of the highest order should be represented in the personnel of the commission, and after appointment, these gentlemen should proceed to delimit suitable electrical districts. In paragraph 28 of the report they recommended that

. . . in the national interest, generating stations and main transmission lines ought, as a general rule, to be publicly owned, and for this purpose a District Electricity Board should be set up in each of the districts when constituted.

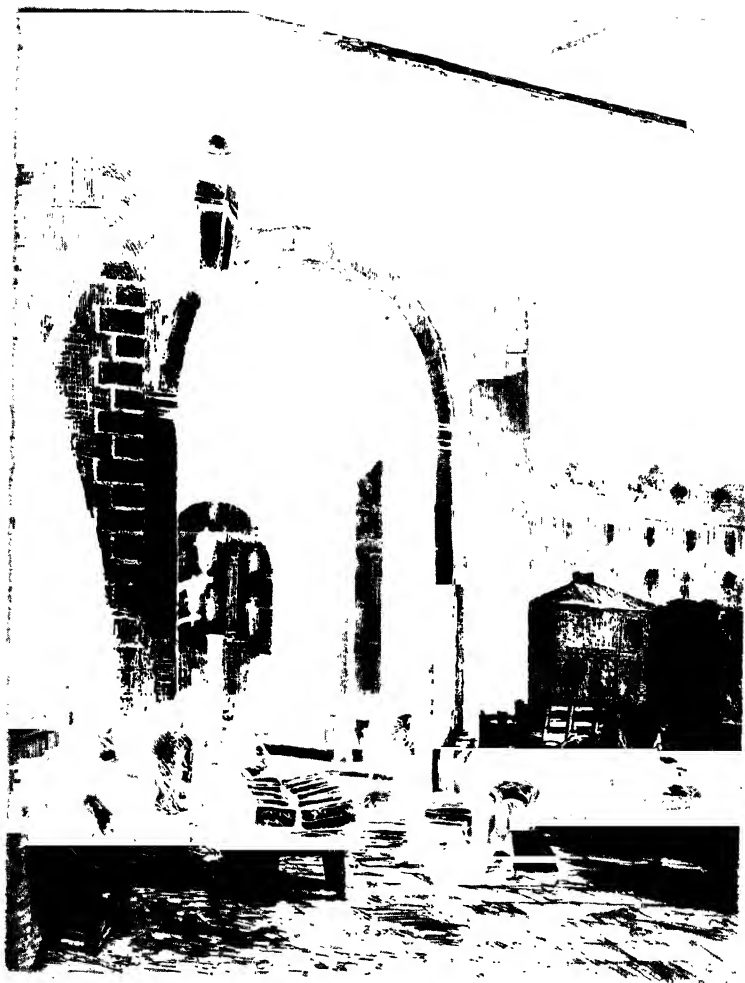
They also expressed the opinion that these boards should have powers to acquire such generating plants of magnitude as are at present owned by railways, tramways, and other public utility concerns.

They pointed out that combination would save duplication of capital expenditure on reserve generating plant, which would be otherwise necessary.

One of the earliest Bills of the post-war Government embodied some of the proposals of this committee, but the most vital were left out, largely as the result of the resistance by various vested interests, when the Committee stage of the Bill was reached. The railway load was specifically excluded as the result of pressure from the railway companies. The expensive commissioners were appointed for the setting up of the district boards, but as all powers of compulsion were eliminated, this Bill, which became an Act in 1919, did not achieve very much. Meanwhile the London County Council was faced with the fact that in 1931 they had the right to buy out the London companies, who so long as they were uncertain whether this option would be exercised, would not extend their plant. At the same time, complaints came from many parts of London

as to the exorbitant prices charged by some of the companies. Nor were the companies by any means idle. The fourteen London companies proceeded to form themselves into main groups, four into an East End group, the balance into a West End group, the latter forming themselves into the London Electricity Joint Committee Limited, both formed to protect their respective interests. Bills were promoted by each group which were stoutly opposed by the Council, but after considerable discussion the London County Council decided to come to terms with them, which were finally embodied in an Act of Parliament in 1925. The Council agreed not to exercise the option they had to buy out the companies in 1931, but to give them forty years' extension, in return for an agreed sliding scale of prices based on a standard price, and a standard dividend increase in distribution to shareholders above the standard, being conditional on a drop in charge to the consumers.

As a result of this agreement, in the same year the Electricity Commissioners approved a scheme for a joint electricity authority to cover London, but comprising a very much larger area extending from Windsor in the west to Gravesend in the east, and taking in a great part of seven counties. The London and Home Counties Joint Electricity Authority is a composite body representing both municipal and company interests, and administers an electrical area with a population of over 8,000,000 and with an assessable value of over £85,000,000. The function of the authority is to see that the inhabitants in the district have available electricity for both light and power at a reasonable price, and to secure that end it can construct central generating stations with main transmission lines. The authority did contemplate constructing a big power station at Chiswick, on the Thames, which is just outside



COVENT GARDEN

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the London boundary on the west side; but though permission was obtained to buy the land it does not seem likely that the scheme will be proceeded with.

On 1 April, 1929, the number of authorized electrical undertakings in the area, which covers close on 1,800 square miles, was forty-six local authorities and forty-four companies, making a total of ninety. Superimposed over these ninety agencies for distribution is the London and Home Counties Joint Electricity Authority, without whose permission no extension of generating plant can be made. That authority in turn is subject to the supervision of the Electricity Commissioners, who are responsible to the Minister of Transport and, through him, to Parliament.

But that is by no means the whole of the story. In 1926 Parliament passed an Electricity Act which provided for the creation of a Central Electricity Board, whose business would be to interconnect the provincial generating stations throughout the country by a system of main transmission lines designated the "Gridiron."

The present position is best stated by a quotation from the first annual report of the new board, dated 31 December, 1928:

The Electricity Commissioners prepare and transmit to the Board schemes relating to large areas, which together will ultimately cover the whole country. Each scheme

(a) determines what generating stations (whether existing or new) shall be "selected stations" at which electricity shall be generated for the purpose of the Board.

(b) provides for the interconnection by means of main transmission lines to be constructed or acquired by the Board of the selected stations with one another and with the system of authorized undertakings in the area of the scheme, and with the system of the Board in adjoining areas.

(c) provides for such standardization of frequency as may be essential to the carrying out of the proposals for interconnection.

How large the operations of the Central Board are likely

to be is evidenced by the fact that it is empowered under the Act that created it, to borrow with the consent of the Electricity Commissioners up to £50,000,000; by the end of 1930 consent had already been given by the commission to £5,500,000 in respect to the standardization of frequency, and £17,500,000 for the construction and acquisition of main transmission lines. These developments cannot but have effect on the activities of the London Joint Authority. Those who care for local government desire to stand by the Joint Authority, which does keep some semblance of association with the areas concerned in such a vital service as electricity.

Through their representatives on the various constituent councils the public can ventilate grievances and make their voice heard, however faintly.

Naturally the Central Authority would like to concentrate power in its own hands to secure uniformity. The curious character of the Joint Authority is its mixture of representation of local authorities and companies.

MARKETS

Nothing illustrates better the faults of London government than its market system. Markets in almost every city are municipally owned and managed. The City Corporation can trace its market rights back to the reign of Edward III, when in 1326 he confirmed their ancient liberties, customs, and privileges to hold markets, and forbade the holding of any others within seven miles of the City boundaries. This monopoly served London well as long as the people worked and lived within the one square mile behind the City walls. But it has now become something of an anachronism.

There is nothing that the City is more jealous of than these market privileges, though now a population of some seven millions depends for a great part of its food-supply on their efficiency.

Not that the City Corporation has by any means a complete monopoly. Charles II, in need of money, granted to the fourth Earl of Bedford the right to establish a fruit and vegetable market on the site of an old convent garden, and this privilege brought into the Bedford family for some two hundred and fifty years a comfortable revenue.

So long as Covent Garden was in comparatively rural surroundings there was no particular objection to this privilege being in private hands. Now this market established by the whim of this erratic Stuart king levies a toll on a large part of the food-supply of Greater London, while the inconvenience of its situation deprives the fruit-growers and market gardeners of the surrounding country of the profits that such a great town population should naturally offer.

Shortly after its inception the London County Council began to look into the market question, in fact as early as 1890 it inserted in its General Powers Bill a clause to obtain the necessary powers, but it was promptly struck out by the House of Lords.

In 1913 the Duke of Bedford disposed of Covent Garden and its market rights. I took the opportunity of this transaction to put in a plea for its purchase by the London County Council. In a letter that appeared in *The Times* of 13 December of that year, and to which considerable prominence was given by that newspaper, I pointed out that markets have been one of the few municipal enterprises that have been outside political controversy. I then went on to say that

except for its central position, Covent Garden has little to be said in its favour. A market for a great town like London, dependent as it is for its supplies on all parts of the world, should be either alongside the port, or linked up with the railways. Situated as it is in the heart of the West End, Covent Garden is a considerable factor in traffic congestion. . . . Nor has it the advantage of being near a residential part of the town or providing a cheap shopping centre for the masses.

The site would be of far greater value for commercial development than for its present purposes. Prices obtained for land in Kingsway give ample proof of this. An ideal site is to be found on the south bank of the Thames between Waterloo Bridge and Charing Cross, where the market could be fed with foreign produce by barge, and where there is the inestimable advantage of direct railway communication. Perishable produce wants rapid handling; fruit, such as strawberries, if it is delayed, has to be thrown away. It is not an uncommon thing, in carting it from the railway to Covent Garden, to miss the market.

I concluded by suggesting that in a continental town such an idea would be quickly taken hold of and worked out.

One can imagine Paris seizing hold of such a suggestion, and working it all to its logical conclusion, while German cities are always grappling with such problems. But London is curiously apathetic.

And it was! The London County Council would not look at the proposal: it was almost shocked at the suggestion. The purchaser was quite willing to open up negotiations, but this golden opportunity of London controlling its fruit and vegetable market was allowed to go by. It has since twice changed hands, and is now in the hands of a public company.

And conditions have not improved. The war shortage had given prominence to food-supply and the prevailing high prices, and to the need for market improvement.

In August 1919 the subject had become so acute that

the London County Council called a special meeting to deal with it, when a resolution was carried urging the Government to appoint

a committee to consider the question of the high price of food and market facilities and ownership in London, with a view to action being taken before the coming winter to secure a cheaper and more plentiful supply of food.

This request for a committee was promptly responded to by the Government, and it duly published reports dealing in turn with fish, meat, fruit, and vegetables.

The report on Covent Garden did not appear until March 1921. It described the buildings as "obsolete, inconvenient, and badly lighted." "The internal conditions," it went on to say, "are such as greatly add to the cost of handling produce, and are responsible for much of the delay that is stated to occur in the delivery of goods, both to and from the market. One of the most conspicuous results of this inadequacy is the development of outside business."

Though the committee advocated extension of the area and improvement of the approaches, they did not favour the removal from the present site; but they concluded by recording as their opinion, in the strongest possible terms,

that this market, the largest of the kind in the kingdom, should be placed under a public authority with a view to its development in the interests of the trade and the consumer.

Covent Garden well repays a visit. Its buildings are picturesque and many of them retain a real eighteenth-century character. Right in the middle is the Royal Opera House. It belongs to the same owners, and except the market be moved, there is every prospect that music will be sacrificed to the cause of fruit and vegetables. Who will win in the struggle it is hard to say. London is apparently indifferent to both competitors for the site. And it

may wake up one morning and find that it has neither an opera house nor the advantage of cheap vegetables and fruit.

The rest of the wholesale markets are mostly in the hands of the City Corporation, which at least has the advantage of being a public body, though it is only responsible to the few thousand electors that happen to have votes within the one square mile.

The Departmental Committee was particularly severe on the fish market. "Billingsgate" has become synonymous for a certain kind of language with a character all its own, and certainly the perfume that rises from the market as you approach it, does not promise you an atmosphere of refinement. I suppose if it was moved from its present site, a well-known English word would lose much of its significance, but this did not deter the committee, in their report dated October 1920, from saying that:

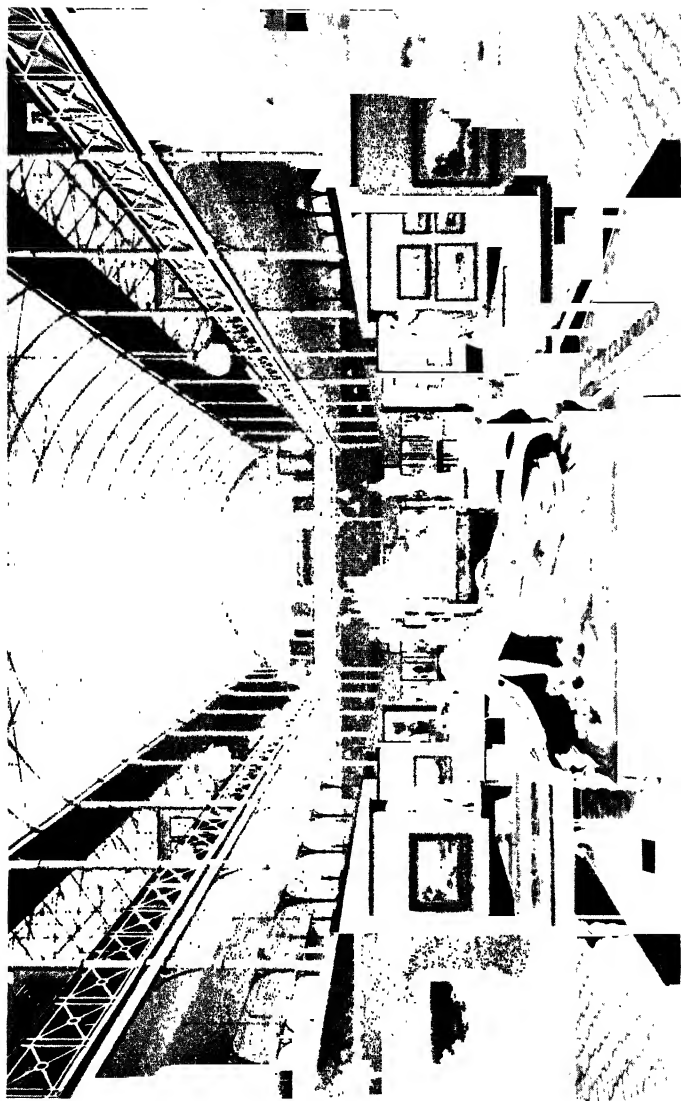
a central fish market for London should be established at a place elsewhere than at Billingsgate, [and that] a suitable site should be secured without further delay.

They pointed out that the area was altogether inadequate, and compared "very unfavourably with that of the principal provincial wholesale fish markets."

They called attention to the inconvenience of the approaches, and the machinery for handling, causing unnecessary delays to the 80,000 van-loads delivered each year. They remarked that:

If the average detention of these vans had been $\frac{1}{2}$ hour, instead of $3\frac{1}{4}$ hours, the saving in cost would have been at the rate of £50,000 per annum, reckoning the cost of detention at 5s. per hour per van. This saving by reducing the cost of distribution of fish in London would undoubtedly benefit the consumer.

The publication of this report has brought about considerable improvements in the market, but it goes on gaily at its old site, within a stone's throw of London Bridge.



BETHNAL GREEN MUSEUM

Victoria and Albert Museum

See p. 227

If it is an anomaly from the food-supply point of view, it can be defended as a curiosity of antiquarian and verbal interest.

The meat market, situated at Smithfield on the other side of the City to Billingsgate, is a striking contrast to the fish market. The same Departmental Committee reported on it:

That the buildings are well provided with approaches and traffic avenues, and the area in their immediate neighbourhood is adequate for the receipt and delivery of goods. The general plan is more than equal to the present requirements of the trade and is sufficient to provide for any extension thereto which can at present be seen.

And the market is a very profitable investment for the City Corporation. In the year ending March 1929 it showed a profit of over £54,000.

An infinitesimal portion of the meat dealt with at the market is consumed in the City area. Even though the market privilege is five hundred years old, it is difficult to justify the Corporation levying a toll on the meat-supply of many millions of people to the advantage of a comparatively few ratepayers who happen to have business premises or offices inside the City area. But Smithfield as a wholesale meat market does credit to the administration of the Corporation, and there seems to be little complaint either against the space provided or the facilities for delivery and removal of supplies.

An interesting market, which is also in the hands of the City Corporation, is that for live cattle at Islington, generally known as the Caledonian. This is the official centre of the London trade in live cattle, sheep, and pigs, but, no doubt due to the congestion of the streets, the large importation of frozen and chilled meat, and various other causes, this is a declining market. There has been, however, associated with this centre, a scrap market for the sale of old carts, old iron, and odds and ends. This is a survival of the old pedlars' market that used to be at the old

Smithfield, and when that was closed it drifted to Caledonian Market. From time to time, cute buyers have picked up various articles of value there, which has won for the place a reputation as a bargain centre. To-day it has become a fashionable resort for people in search of antiques which they hope to discover among the rubbish displayed. But the buyer now wants to be very wideawake indeed to unearth any treasure from the goods shown by the clever dealers who frequent the place.

Perhaps the market that has caused the most controversy is that held at Spitalfields. This is another one that can trace its origin to the Merry Monarch, who in 1682 granted to one John Bulch the right to hold a market

in or near a place called Spittle-square in the parish of Stepney together with all dues, tolls, piccage, stallage and other profits, advantages and emoluments whatsoever appertaining in any wise to such market.

The market changed hands many times, and the end of the nineteenth century found a Mr. Horner in possession of a lease, the market covering about two and three-quarter acres. Various attempts were made to dispute the right of this market to any special privileges, the more ancient charter of the City to a monopoly going back to the fourteenth century being quoted against it. But the owners made good their claim before the House of Lords, and they successfully resisted the attempt to establish a rival market by the adjacent railway at Bishopsgate. Meanwhile the market grew and extended over the neighbouring streets, to the great inconvenience of traffic and the general public. By 1892 things had become so bad that the London County Council began to discuss ways and means of taking it over. After considerable negotiation, the Council in 1899 decided to seek parliamentary powers to acquire the market by

agreement or compulsion, and in the next year they presented the Bill. The Corporation took the opportunity the same year to promote a similar Bill, reasserting their claim to be the market authority within a radius of seven miles, and expressing the fear that the London County Council might engage in competition with their ancient rights and privileges. Meanwhile the Stepney Borough Council, as the authority in whose area the market was located, put in a claim for consideration, and the House of Lords inserted a clause in the London County Council Bill giving Stepney an option to purchase or lease the market within ten years. In 1911 the whole matter was reopened again, when the Stepney Council decided to offer its rights to the County Council. But meanwhile a change had come over the composition of the London County Council. They had lost interest in markets, and were also anxious not to come into conflict with the City Corporation, and they therefore declined to intervene. This was the opportunity of the Corporation, and the market has now passed into their hands, strengthening their claim to be the market authority for London.

There are a number of other wholesale markets which are of considerable interest, but I have described the most important of them, and the others do not materially affect the food-supply of London.

In their first report, dated February 1920, the Departmental Committee recommended:

That market facilities ought to be administered not in the interests of private owners, or of separate local authorities, but in the public interest, that full legal powers and full financial resources should be made available for that purpose, and that the administration of those powers should be vested in one central authority for the whole of Greater London, and that the last of these suggestions should be adopted without delay.

That recommendation was made over ten years ago, and there is no sign of anything being done to implement it. Vested interests are very strong in London, and there does not seem any immediate prospect of any change in a system which, though there is little to defend it in principle, is dug down deep in the past.

Up to the present I have dealt with wholesale markets, but a curious feature of London is the absence of properly constituted retail markets. In almost every provincial town and continental city there are one or more fruit, fish, and meat markets where the frugal housewife can go on one or two days a week and select at market prices her food-supplies.

Attempts have been made to establish such places in London without much success.

In 1866 the late Baroness Burdett-Coutts obtained powers from Parliament to establish a market near Shoreditch Church, in Bethnal Green, for fruit, vegetables, and fish, in a philanthropic desire to provide a centre where the poor people of the neighbourhood could buy their requirements cheaply in pleasant surroundings. In other words, her purpose was to establish a regular continental market. Columbia Market, as it was called, was built in a flamboyant Gothic style with spacious market halls, and every facility to attract both buyer and seller. No expense was spared, and the site and buildings must have cost a very large sum. The enterprise, however, was a complete failure. The London public is accustomed to the street market and the street traders, or costermongers, preferred the freedom from restraint or regulation and the immunity from rent and other charges which they enjoy in the public highway. Columbia Market is now derelict, a monument of a generous woman out for a good purpose, and a warning to those who

think they can change the habits of a people by a lavish expenditure of money.

Street markets are a characteristic London institution. They are to be found in almost every populous part of London. Up to a year or two ago they were governed only by custom. Certain streets had become recognized as places where on some days the coster could pitch his barrow without interference by the authorities. These places have many of the characteristics of a retail market, and are extremely popular with people with slender purses. But with the growth of motor traffic and the increasing congestion of the streets, they have been viewed with no special favour by the authorities. Besides, some of the multiple-shop-keepers are none too friendly to competitors who are often able to undersell them. On the instigation of the Bermondsey Borough Council and one or two other councils, the London County Council passed through Parliament an Act which made it unlawful to sell from a barrow or stall occupying a stationary position in any street without a licence from the local borough council. The proposal was strenuously opposed at the time by the street traders, and I did my best to defend their interests, in fact I obtained permission for them to state their case before the Private Bills Committee of the House of Commons. The street trader often only makes his living by moving from market to market, and he now has to obtain a licence from each borough, which it is not easy to get, and the various fees add to his expense.

Attempts have been made to establish covered markets in various centres, but without much success. Meanwhile the multiple shop and the co-operative store are drawing away a considerable portion of the public from the market habit.

CHAPTER XVIII

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND LONDON, WITH SOME NOTES ON THE LONDON POLICE

LONDON suffers certain disadvantages from being the capital city, especially in the constant intervention in its affairs by Government departments, who are only too willing to encroach on something which is near at hand, and which they therefore feel is their concern. But these disabilities inherent in the seat of Government are more than outweighed by the privileges that go with it.

The royal palaces, the Palace of St. James, the Palace of Westminster, and such places as Whitehall, the Horse Guards, the great public buildings, all add to its dignity and beauty. I am tempted to trace their history, but they are a little outside the scope of a book of this character. But the national museums and picture galleries are benefits that accrue to London that do call for more than a passing reference.

Like so many London institutions, they are so scattered that they hardly enjoy the fame which the magnificence of the treasures they house deserves.

The British Museum, the greatest and oldest English museum, dates back to 1753, when under the will of Sir Hans Sloane the nation obtained possession of his remarkable and varied collection of works of art and manuscripts at two-fifths of their original cost. A home was provided for the collection by the purchase of Montagu House, which was opened in 1759 as the "British Museum."

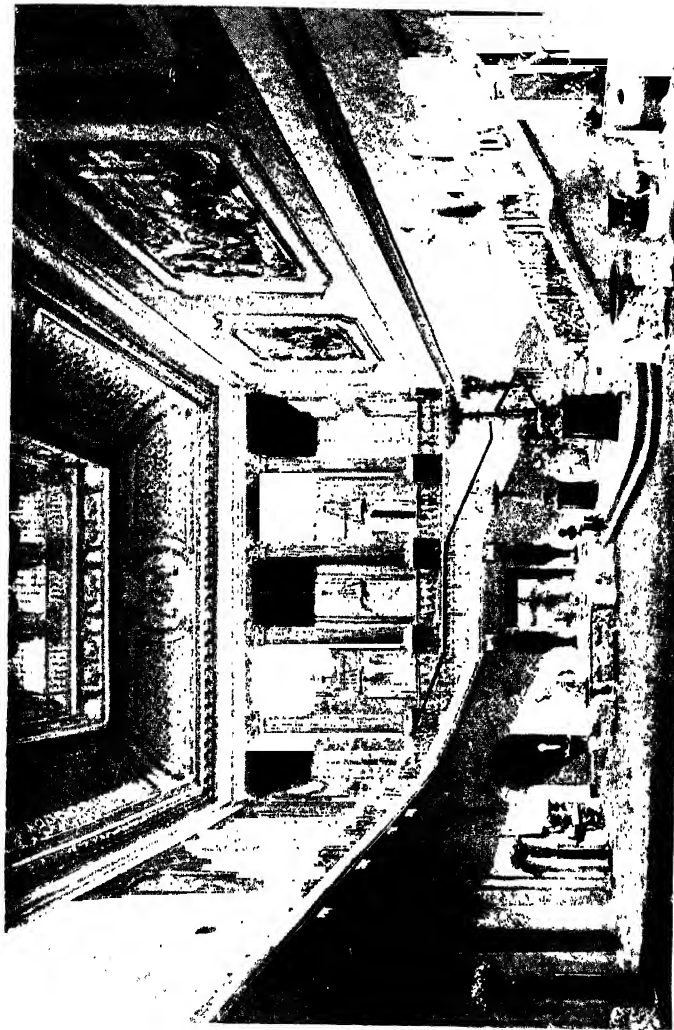
George III interested himself in the museum, and in 1801 presented a collection of Egyptian antiquities, an example followed by private benefactors, while from time to time purchases have been made by the State. The museum soon outgrew its premises and they had to be extended. About 1816 the old house was found to be structurally unsound and unfit for its purpose. In 1823 Sir R. Smirke was commissioned to design new buildings, but the main structure was not completed until 1847. Its dignified, but rather gloomy, Classic front, blackened by the soot of Bloomsbury, is, to many Englishmen, the symbol of an English museum. Certainly it has rather a depressing effect on the passers-by, though its very griminess gives an impression of antiquity worthy of the ancient treasures that it contains.

Not long after the completion of the new building it was found that the expansion of the library had been so rapid that it was crowded out for want of space. The plan of the buildings provided for an interior quadrangle. In this space the Library was built from designs by Sir Anthony Panizzi, keeper of the Department of Printed Books. This library was a considerable achievement of early Victorian planning and design. The dome is one hundred and six feet in height, and at the time was said to be second only to the Parthenon in Rome. The circular Reading-room affords plenty of space for three hundred readers, while the building provides three miles lineal of bookcases eight feet high. In 1757 George II presented to the museum the royal library, which dated back to Henry VII and which included the library of Cranmer. He handed over the privilege belonging to the Crown since the reign of Queen Anne, of being presented with a copy of every publication entered at Stationers' Hall. This library is a great national institution, and can compete, both in the quality and

quantity of its possessions, with any in the world. The museum is managed by trustees appointed by the Prime Minister of the day, who fills all vacancies. It receives a direct grant by Treasury vote from Parliament. It is divided into some dozen departments, such as Print Department, Greek and Roman Antiquities, etc., each under a director or keeper.

Sir Hans Sloane's collection included a considerable botanical section, and this with zoological, geological, and mineralogical sections expanded so rapidly that there was no room for them in the main building. A new home had to be found for them on part of the old Kensington Exhibition site. This building with its terra-cotta front, though designed in a florid pseudo-Gothic style, is not without magnificence.

Close by this museum, and only separated by a road, is the Victoria and Albert Museum. Originally known as the South Kensington, it was initiated by the Science and Art Department out of the surplus funds of the Exhibition of 1851 in a temporary wood and iron structure, popularly known as the "Brompton Boilers." It aimed at encouraging the study of the arts and sciences. It is now a department of the Board of Education, but though it still retains its educational and instructional side, it has become a great art museum with fine collections of furniture, china, glass, jewellery, lace, metal-work, etc. The construction of the buildings, now complete, was spread over some seventy years. Whatever may be said of the Renaissance stone frontage, there can be nothing but praise for the planning of the interior, especially for the fine rooms filled with period furniture of priceless value that has done so much for the revival of the cabinet trade in the best eighteenth-century tradition.



ENTRANCE HALL OF STAFFORD (NOW LANCASTER) HOUSE
From the water-colour drawing by Joseph Nash (1809-78)
Coffices of H. M. Stationery Office
See p. 228

Also in South Kensington, and under the Board of Education, is the Science Museum, in a plain but solid stone building, still unfinished. Considerable development has been made in the collection, especially on the industrial side.

There is one other museum under the Board of Education that I must mention. This is the Bethnal Green Museum, which came into being almost by accident. A site was wanted for part of the exhibition buildings of the Kensington Exhibition of 1862. No one was specially anxious to have them as they presented no great architectural merit, but the people of Bethnal Green thought it was too good an opportunity to miss. The buildings were transferred there, and opened as a museum and a branch of the South Kensington by Queen Victoria in 1872. For a long time it was used as a dumping ground for surplus exhibits and odds and ends. It was a depressing place, and served no really useful purpose except as a quiet place to spend a Sunday afternoon in an overcrowded and rather noisy neighbourhood. A few years ago a new curator came on the scene in the person of Mr. Sabin. He very rapidly transformed the whole atmosphere, cleared out the cobwebs, and brought sunshine and light into the whole place. Finding that it was largely frequented by children, he conceived the plan of making a great part of it into a children's museum with exhibits of special interest to the child mind. There is a remarkable collection of dolls' houses in which Her Majesty the Queen has graciously interested herself.

There are two other sections of special interest. Silk-weaving was at one time a considerable industry in the neighbourhood, and there are still some few hand-looms at work. There is therefore a display of silk materials of

interest both to the collector and the weaver. The cabinet industry is now a staple trade of the district, and for its benefit a small but representative exhibition of examples of furniture has been organized. It is altogether a delightful place and seems to have found a new lease of life.

No book on London, and especially no chapter on its museums, would be complete without some mention of the London Museum. In a rapidly changing London, with fine old mansions being pulled down to make way for hotels and shops, and many old landmarks being removed, it was obviously necessary to preserve every possible relic. When the late Viscount Harcourt was First Commissioner of Works, he conceived the idea of such a museum in collaboration with Viscount Esher. The king and queen interested themselves in the project, and in 1911 placed part of Kensington Palace at their disposal.

In 1913 Lord Leverhulme bought the lease of Stafford House, close by St. James's Palace, and handed it over as a permanent home for the museum.

The building only dates from 1825, but it is a fine example of late Georgian architecture on a palatial and generous scale.

The collection is of varied character and goes back to the Stone Age. Of special interest are a number of models shown in the basement which reproduce the streets and buildings of London before the Great Fire and earlier. The museum is still in its infancy, and every year an increasing number of treasures are being added to the collection.

In the same building, now known as Lancaster House, is the London Society, which is doing much to preserve the amenities of London and protect its ancient monuments from destruction.

But though museums are placed in this chapter because

they are an example of Government activity in London, the County Council is responsible for two small museums. The late Mr. F. J. Horniman made an interesting collection of a varied character at his private house at Forest Hill. These he finally housed in a specially designed building which he handed over to the London County Council with a considerable park attached. In the seventeenth century the Ironmongers' Company built some almshouses in the Kingsland Road out of a bequest by a Sir Robert Geffrye. The value of the property being considerable, the company decided to sell it and utilize the proceeds to house the inmates elsewhere. The Council, however, considered that the houses had enough æsthetic and antiquarian interest to be worth preserving. Once having obtained possession, they had to put them to some useful purpose, and they therefore converted them into rooms for the display of furniture.

So London is now happily placed for the study of furniture. There is the exhibition at the Victoria and Albert, the one at the Bethnal Green Museum, and another at the Geffrye.

But to return to State activities: there are the two great picture galleries, the National Gallery at Trafalgar Square, and the Gallery of Modern Art, Millbank, both run by trustees appointed by the Prime Minister, and from money voted each year by Parliament. At the back of the National Gallery, too, is the National Portrait Gallery.

With such priceless possessions at their door, provided out of the taxpayer's pocket and with no contribution from the rates, Londoners have indeed compensations for the loss of some rights which the presence of the capital entails.

The Land Registry in Lincoln's Inn Fields is a State Institution worth mentioning here, as its work is mainly limited to London.

Since the reign of James I the archaic formalities required to transfer land in England have been subject for complaint. Innumerable Royal Commissions, parliamentary committees, and municipal authorities have inquired into them and reported as to remedies.

Registration of title is the only method yet known by which land may circulate speedily, simply, and with State-guaranteed safety. It is in full and successful operation in many of the United States and Canadian provinces; in Australia and New Zealand; it is universal in Germany and Austria. But London is the only considerable area in which it is compulsory in England.

This is due to the circumstance that when a generation ago Parliament, under the guidance of Lord Halsbury as Lord Chancellor, passed the Land Transfer Act introducing compulsory registration of title, the London County Council consented to its being tried out, as an experiment, in the Administrative County of London. The consent given by the London County Council has been justified. On 30 April, 1929, the Council adopted a report of the General Purposes Committee affirming that, as a consequence of compulsory registration of title, the investigation of title in London is very considerably simplified and the legal costs payable reduced. The Council recommended other county councils to follow the example it had set them, and apply for compulsory registration of title in their areas.

In its early days there was considerable opposition to it by lawyers and surveyors, but now the service given is so efficient and the transfer of land has been so much simplified that the system is recognized as in the public interest.

Since the war fees have been reduced, the time taken for registration of title speeded up, and what is more important,

the department pays for itself, and is no charge on the public purse.

The State plays a far bigger part in the government of London than it does in other great towns, which is inevitable in the capital city.

The Home Secretary, through the Commissioner of Police, is responsible for the police; the Minister of Transport takes a large share in the regulation of traffic; the First Commissioner of Works and the Office of Works manage the royal parks, and Crown property such as Trafalgar Square; the President of the Board of Education is responsible for the museums at Kensington and Bethnal Green; and the Prime Minister controls the British Museum and national picture galleries.

Inroads are constantly being made by the State departments into London local affairs, though we have avoided the continental idea of direct control of the capital city.

Provincial towns manage their own police; but, with the exception of the City, owing to reasons of State, London has no voice in the management of its Police Force. The entire control is in the hands of commissioners responsible to, and appointed by, the Home Office. Formerly the organization was worked from a building in old Scotland Yard, just off Whitehall, and when new offices were erected on the Victoria Embankment the name was retained. Hence the name Scotland Yard has become intimately associated with the preservation of law and order in the metropolis.

The area of administration extends far outside the county and has become synonymous with Greater London.

Sir Robert Peel was the father of the force. He passed an Act through Parliament in 1830, the preamble of which explained that

the nightly watch and nightly police had been found inadequate to the detection of crime, by reason of the unfitness of the individuals employed and the insufficiency of their numbers.

Much fun was poked at the expense of the new keepers of the peace, and the name "Peeler," given in derision, has clung to them ever since. The force, now a century old, has won the respect and admiration of the world as much for its good temper as for its discipline and efficiency. The truncheon, a small baton of wood, is made to do the work which most continental police have to do with the sword.

The finance of the police is another of those anomalies of London government. In the provinces the force is maintained out of the rates, and being managed by the municipality, this is a proper thing. To keep some control, the Home Office subsidizes these local forces, provided they reach a certain standard of efficiency. In a desire for uniformity, the London Police is worked on the same principle. A receiver is appointed to manage the finances and he has a right to call on the rates. A limit of fivepence was fixed by Parliament; in the statute that makes this provision arrangement was made to extend the police rate up to fivepence-halfpenny to meet any deficiency in the pension fund, and accordingly in 1909 the Home Secretary sanctioned such an increase. In response to public agitation, in 1910 Parliament arranged to give members of the force a weekly rest day, and the cost of this and a further deficit in the Pension Fund made the fivepence-halfpenny limit insufficient. Parliament, therefore, in 1911 passed an Act raising the limit to sevenpence.

Following the police strike towards the end of the war, there was a public inquiry, under the chairmanship of Lord Desborough, into the pay and conditions, which were found to be in many ways most unsatisfactory. This led to a

general increase in wages and improvement in conditions, and the rates are now called upon to contribute about one shilling in the pound. In the year 1927-8 the Metropolitan Police cost about £8,000,000. This amount was reduced by various receipts in aid, such as £244,000 deducted from the policeman's pay towards his pension, and another £400,000 is taken off for police used on national service. These various items bring down the amount falling on rates and taxes to £7,250,000. The State finds £3,500,000 of this, and the rates the balance. The authorized strength in 1928 was 20,000. The increasing complexity of traffic absorbs each year a larger number of police, and there is now a call for a still further increase in their numbers. Their skill in this branch of their work has become proverbial.

The police license public carriages, cabs, omnibuses, tram-cars, and their drivers. There is a special department at Scotland Yard for the licensing of taxi-cab drivers, who have to pass a stiff examination in the geography of London and a severe test in driving. In any case of bad behaviour or dangerous driving the commissioner withdraws the licence. A very high standard is insisted on.

The responsibilities of the Traffic Branch of the department are considerably increased by the London Traffic Act of 1924. Before that date the police could not limit the number of licences given to omnibuses to ply for hire on the London streets. Now they have the power to limit the number given on any street declared a restricted street by the Ministry of Transport on the advice of the London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee, and this power is freely used. It attaches considerable monopoly value to such a licence, and therefore involves a considerable responsibility.

The police are associated with the duty of declaring a

road a "one-way street," and of course with the system of "gyratory" and "roundabout" traffic, etc.

A couple of years ago there was considerable criticism of the management of the Metropolitan Police, and one or two unfortunate cases of irregularities gave colour to these attacks.

But on the whole the force justifies the general confidence of the public. Considering the variety of their duties, and the large and difficult area they cover, the standard maintained is high.

Though nowhere in the world are there larger crowds to be regulated, it is but on rare occasions that they come into conflict with the police, which speaks much for the tact of the force as well as for the good temper of the London populace. And it is nearly all done with kindness, no drawing of swords or use of firearms, and if by chance there is trouble, it is at worst only the truncheon that is used. What better tribute can be given to the London Police than that?

CHAPTER XIX

GREATER LONDON, AND A DIP INTO THE FUTURE

THE problem of London is not growing less; it is becoming more of a problem every day. The people were pushed outside the walls of the old City by the pressure of banks and trade; now they are being pushed by the same forces outside the boundaries of the new London County. To-day there are other forces at work. Electricity and petrol are continuing what the steam engine commenced. With steam, travelling in a tunnel was an infliction because of the poisonous sulphur fumes; electricity has purified the air and made it possible to drive tubes here, there, and everywhere, without injury to the passengers that travel by them.

The Workmen's Fares Act of 1883 has been another important factor. The main trunk lines have been compelled to give cheap return fares to workmen travelling to their work before 8 a.m., and to this such places as Ilford and Hendon owe their remarkable expansion. These travelling facilities have meant the establishment of huge dormitories, the dwellers in which are employed by day inside London. These tendencies are all to the good. The farther from his work a man can live without serious inconvenience, the less the pressure should be on accommodation in the centre. A healthy sign is the tendency for the population inside the county to decrease, though it does not necessarily follow that there is more room for those

who are left behind. Often as soon as a dwelling-house is vacated it is converted into an office or a workshop.

The figures are interesting. Census returns previous to 1911 had shown a steady upward trend inside the county, but that year for the first time showed a slight decrease; in the following ten years there was a further drop, and there is every reason to believe that the census of 1931 will show a still further decline. It is not that building has ceased. On the contrary, the land inside the county boundary is being more and more covered with buildings, and each year leaves fewer vacant plots. But it is being put to different uses: commerce and industry are absorbing more sites and are spreading over a larger area. This change would have been more rapid still if it had not been for the operation of the Rent Restrictions Act, which prevents the conversion of pre-war workmen's dwellings to commercial purposes, except that alternative accommodation can be found for the displaced persons.

While the population inside the county declines, the adjoining districts expand. Greater London is the district under the control of the Metropolitan Police, and comprises all parishes any part of which is within a radius of twelve miles of Charing Cross, and covers an area of a little less than 700 square miles. In 1891, this London, which of course includes the County of London, had a population of a little more than 5,500,000; by 1921 it reached a figure of nearly 7,500,000. Nor is this growth confined to this official Greater London. The electrification of the Southern Railway has brought within reach of tens of thousands of City workers the vales of Kent and the Surrey hills, and new dormitories are springing up twenty-five and even thirty miles out.

These new communities require water, drainage, elec-

tricity, gas, transport, and education, and none of these services can be isolated for a particular district; they are almost all interdependent. A traffic route commences somewhere in the City, and omnibuses which carry people each day to work in the town congest the London streets, but they sleep and pay rates in some country village in Surrey, Essex, or Kent, where the young children are educated. But as these grow older, they too work in London, where they find it convenient to attend evening classes or day continuation schools. It is the limitation of the county boundary that has led to the creation of numerous boards and *ad hoc* authorities.

The police presented no difficulty, because in London it is managed by a commissioner responsible to the Home Office, and not to a municipal authority. But water, traffic, and electricity are each controlled by indirectly elected authorities covering a very wide area. If the population they served lived inside London, the duty of providing these services could have been given to the London County Council.

And the multiplication of these boards is by no means satisfactory; there is very little public interest in their meetings, and they are deprived of the stimulus of public opinion.

Shortly after the war, the London County Council became conscious that this Greater London question presented difficulties that had to be faced. In October 1919 they issued a report, in which they marshalled the facts but avoided suggesting remedies, preferring to leave it to the Government, whom they proceeded to ask for a Royal Commission. There was good reason for this modesty, though as it turned out it defeated its purpose. The County Council felt that if they put forward a positive scheme

they would arouse the suspicion of the adjoining counties and towns, who would see in it a desire to glorify the central body at the expense of its neighbours.

In 1921 the Royal Commission was appointed, issuing its report in 1923.

Some striking evidence was given by the Council's witnesses as to the need for machinery for dealing with services that operated over a larger area than London. Already the London County Council had to take into its drainage system sewage and storm water from a number of adjoining districts.

For many years, too, the Council had acquired land for parks outside its border rather than see it sacrificed to building, though if this practice were extended there was a real danger of outside authorities shirking their responsibilities in the hope that the London rates would come to their aid.

But the best example of all was to be found in the London County Council out-county housing estates.

Owing to the shortage of suitable land inside the county, the London County Council had been compelled to buy vast tracts of land outside its area where thousands of houses were being built, the rent of which would be subsidized out of the London rates for sixty years, but the tenants of which, directly they went into occupation, would cease to be either voters or ratepayers in London, but would become citizens of some other local authority.

Not that they were made welcome by their new authority. On the contrary, in many districts the local councils have shown themselves by no means pleased to receive persons largely drawn from the poorer sections of the community; their contributions to the rates would not cover the cost of the extra school places that would have to be provided for

the children, to say nothing of the public health and poor law service.

The local authorities themselves had been conscious of the difficulty, in fact at a conference at the end of 1918, drawn from the whole of Greater London, they had passed a resolution in favour of working as a co-operative unit with a single authority for housing purposes. At another conference in the following year they went even farther, deciding to ask for a new *ad hoc* housing authority, though the London County Council dissented. Water, electricity, traffic, could not be limited by any artificial geographic lines. If the services were to be efficient and cheap, they had to operate over a very much larger area than the County of London, and as the new districts grew they stood to gain even more than London by unification of supply.

A board had already been set up for water, and after the commission had issued its report, boards were constituted for both electricity and traffic.

The Departmental Committee on Food Supply had advocated a board for markets—the local authorities themselves had asked for a housing board, and it looks as if the great new London which is spreading tentacles many miles into the country is to be controlled by a whole series of boards—as someone wittily remarked: "London will be 'boarded' up."

But the Royal Commission was not convinced as to the need for any drastic change or any extension of London's boundaries. Some members of the London County Council had visualized a great new London extending out twenty miles each way with a grand central council concentrating only on large problems, as water, traffic, electricity, main roads, and bridges, leaving to subordinate though important local councils those services which can be most efficiently

carried out on the spot. The status of the central authority and these town or municipal councils would be very similar to the relation of the London County Council to the borough councils, except that with wider responsibilities the new authority would delegate more to the localities.

But in Greater London there are no less than one hundred and fifty-two councils of various kinds. Inside London proper there are thirty—the London County Council, the City Corporation, and twenty-eight borough councils, while outside these are parts of three counties, Kent, Surrey, and Essex, and the whole of Middlesex; there are three county boroughs, eight borough councils, sixty-four urban district councils, and a dozen rural councils—a goodly array of authorities all with their clerks and officials and local offices. The vast majority of them mobilized against any change; they viewed with suspicion any proposal that might decrease their importance, though many might stand to gain by a recasting of duties. The London County Council might not put forward concrete proposals for fear of hurting local susceptibilities, but this did not prevent the officials of these many councils producing a hundred and one reasons against any change.

Though the Royal Commission did not recommend any alteration in the constitution of Greater London, they put forward a proposal for the establishment under statute of an advisory body,

by the name of the London and Home Counties Advisory Committee, to advise and assist the appropriate Minister responsible to Parliament in the administration of such matters relating to transport, town planning, and main drainage.

Out of this recommendation came in 1924 the London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee, but this

committee is limited to advising the Minister of Transport on traffic questions.

One further proposal they put forward out of which nothing definite is likely to come, but which is worth referring to because it raises some of the difficulties that sooner or later will have to be faced. The commissioners pointed out that just as inside the county

there are separate local government areas predominantly inhabited either by the rich or by the poor, [so] the same problem has arisen in a number of separate local government areas surrounding the administrative County at various distances, so that at some points particularly to the East of the County of London there is a series of densely populated poor districts closely related to London by the ties of business; while at other points, particularly to the South and West, there are other districts, generally of a more prosperous character, which for business purposes are no less closely related to London.

In other words, just as inside the county there are cities of the rich and cities of the poor, so a similar problem has arisen outside. Away out in the East End there are poor districts like West Ham and Barking, largely inhabited by dockers and unskilled labour, with a lot of unemployment and poverty and a low assessable value. The result is that they are always in financial difficulties. From the very circumstances of the case they have heavy calls on them for school places and public health services, with very little money available to provide them owing to the small produce of the penny rate. At the other end of London are pleasant towns such as Wimbledon and Richmond with comparatively few poor, with many large houses and a high assessable value. These places would naturally leave well alone.

The Royal Commission recommended an equalization of rates between the richer and the poorer districts as "fair in principle and ought to be brought into operation

with the least possible delay." They went on to say that it was to "measures of equalization and not to changes in administration that we must look for a solution of the most pressing difficulties which confront local authorities in London and the surrounding districts." However, nothing has been done in that direction except in so far as the Local Government Act of 1928 made a fresh distribution of Poor Law duties. The Royal Commission was by no means unanimous. Two members, Sir Robert Donald and Mr. Walsh, took a very different view from the majority. They recommended the creation of a new central authority for London, which solution, they pointed out,

involves the abolition of numerous redundant and overlapping authorities and makes for simplicity and dignity in local government by consolidating all local affairs in one authority in each locality and by allocating to a new Central Authority the essential services common to an enlarged area.

The new authority was to be charged with transport, town-planning and housing, main drainage and sewage disposal, water-supply and poor law, mental and fever hospitals, public health, fire protection, parks and open spaces, markets, river conservancies, small holdings, building acts, by-laws and equalization of rates, and finally education, though the management of elementary education and all schools was to be left to the localities. At first sight this would seem to leave little for the minor authorities, but they recommended that much of the local work now centralized should be decentralized and delegated to the local councils.

This minority report concluded by saying that they had in view in all their recommendations the unity of London.

We hold that Greater London is one and indivisible in all essentials which constitute one great civic and urban community. It differs only from other large urban communities by its immensity. The problem of size as it affects local self-government is met by the dual

municipal system, which does not differ in principle from certain phases of federalism in national government within the British Empire.

I make no apology for quoting this at length because it very much expresses my own view.

The alternative to something of this kind is the creation of indirect or nominated boards, which I consider wholly undesirable. *Ad hoc* water, electricity, and traffic authorities are already in being, though the traffic authority is at present confined to advising a Government department. Actually for traffic we are faced with another even more objectionable alternative. The Government proposes to set up a traffic board consisting of some five or six gentlemen nominated by the Ministry of Transport, in whom will be vested the tramways, the omnibuses, and all local railways; they will have no responsibility except to themselves, though there will be an appeal to the Minister if services are unduly curtailed, or to a tribunal if fares are arbitrarily raised. But the people who live in and around London, whose daily movement is so dependent on cheap and efficient transport, will have little chance to influence policy or ventilate grievances. When a tired woman after a long day's work has to fight for a place in a crowded bus, or hang by a strap in a carriage in an overcrowded train, she will not have the satisfaction of grumbling at an arbitrary company or complaining to a local councillor. Her fate will be in the hands of five or six clever middle-aged gentlemen, no doubt supremely qualified for their jobs, but very far away from the humble folk that travel by their trains and trams and buses. This may or may not be a good thing, but it is certainly not local government.

The failure to devise a scheme for the government of Greater London inevitably leads to boards and authorities of this kind. There is a school of thought who likes them,

who profoundly distrusts directly elected bodies and prefers bureaucracy or autocracy. I have no doubt, if the right autocrat can be found, he can run a city very efficiently and well so long as he remains there. But the weakness of the superman is that he has a way of dying, and he may be replaced by a weaker, and possibly even a corrupt, person.

It is even more difficult to get at the same time half a dozen good men of proved capacity who, uncontrolled, can be relied upon to manage a monopoly efficiently. And they too pass away and give place perhaps to inferior persons. I am not, therefore, attracted by these nominated boards, which are the latest substitute for local government.

We are forced to fall back on the municipal precedent and the elected council or corporation. Parliament is overloaded with work. With interests extending over the whole world and with over forty millions to govern, the House of Commons has already no time to discharge its duties of criticism and financial control properly. Much legislation is held up by the congestion of the time-table; private members are being deprived of many of their rights and privileges because of the pressure of Government business.

The very last thing that is wanted is to put more responsibilities on a State department. And this is exactly what the proposal to set up a London Traffic Board will involve. In the last resort the Minister of Transport will be responsible, and the only way to get at him is once a year on the vote for his salary, or on the adjournment motion at eleven o'clock at night, when members are only thinking how soon they can get back to their homes.

The right line of advance is to devolve as many responsibilities as possible from the national Government to the local government units. A plea has been put forward for

a London Parliament, and the urbanized area is large enough for it. But we do not want two kings at Brentford. Two Parliaments sitting in London might give a wrong impression. A City Council or a County Council is important enough, provided it is furnished with large enough powers. Personally I prefer the old municipal tradition. It is good enough for most great cities on the Continent and in the Dominions; it has served well great towns such as Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Glasgow.

If only the old City would sacrifice itself to the cause of progress, it would make a splendid finish to a great and historic past. If, instead of clinging to its privileges long after London citizens have ceased to live inside its walls, it agreed to share them with the mighty new London that sprawls over five counties, it would be worthy of its ancestors who fought on the side of Pym and Hampden and stood by the cause of liberty and progress right through the eighteenth century.

If, unmindful of the new world around it, it clings selfishly to claims it cannot defend by reason, it may find itself swept away by forces that, in years to come, will be too strong for it to resist. This would be a tragic end to a glorious history.

The ideal, therefore, would be for the City Corporation to follow the example of other towns and absorb its suburbs. Because it refused to do so close on a hundred years ago, London has had to be content with a series of compromises, with county instead of municipal government. Some day we may live to see the Lord Mayor drive through the streets in his gilded coach, not merely, as to-day, as the representative of a privileged few, but as the first citizen of the greatest municipality in the world, that Greater London, which cries out for ordered local government.

That may be an idle dream, but I am satisfied it is the right solution.

What is in a name? Tradition and precedent have their uses. The County Council has done great work, but it would draw to it greater authority if it could be wedded to the past. Parliament will some day have to face the London problem. Maybe it will decide to leave the City to linger on as an ancient monument long after it has ceased to be a living entity. But whether Greater London is given a local Parliament, or a glorified County Council, or City Government, something will have to be done if it is not to be smothered with a number of boards and make-shift authorities.

London is a lovable place; there is no more attractive town anywhere. Its streets are full of romance and round every other corner is a bit of history. One of its charms is that it has grown up as if by accident, from no ordered plan. These are qualities that one is loath to disturb, in fact the town planner and reformer must be careful to preserve them. But its teeming millions can no longer be shut in by narrow streets and ancient tradition. They want sunshine and air let in to their lives, which the skill and experience of modern architects and surveyors can give, if civic order can be brought out of the confused organization of London government. We can take a leaf out of the book of German town planners and civic governors.

The Germans have made an art of town life. We may have to borrow something from them if these large unwieldy cities are to function. The over-burgomaster (*Oberbürgermeister*) combines the position of a town clerk and the head of a Government department, with dignity of status thrown in. With a natural and proper desire to keep officials in their place, we have relegated the head of

a staff of four thousand to the comparatively humble post of town or county "clerk." If we are to attract to these great positions the best brains and give them proper authority, some improved status will have to be found for them, not so pretentious perhaps as over-burgomaster, but at least sufficiently dignified to secure the right men.

The work of local government is becoming more exacting every year, and the difficulty of finding men and women of capacity and experience to give their time to it is increasing. In Germany, a man enters the municipal civil service as a real avenue for ambition, and the theory of local government is studied as a highly skilled profession. London should take the lead in that direction. With twenty-eight town clerks, and with well-paid county officials, it has posts to offer which should draw to its service men of real administrative ability. That is one of the lines of advance which I recommend. I have no fault to find with the present generation of officials; but a better status must be given to their position and a serious attempt made to draw into this work the most suitable men, who should be trained scientifically for their tasks. In Germany there has grown up a municipal service which men of ambition enter in the same way as they become doctors, architects, or lawyers. The highly organized modern town requires men of the highest attainments, and the profession of town administration has to be learnt. But in most German cities the over-burgomaster takes his place alongside the elected burgomaster, often he is above him, and in some towns is associated with a political party and can be removed when there is a change in the complexion of the council. Though no attempt is made by the paid full-time over-burgomaster to conceal his political opinions, as a general rule, if he is efficient, no attempt is made to remove him from his post

with the advent of a new party. But I am satisfied that our English traditions of keeping permanent officials out of politics is the right one, and should be preserved at all costs. But while keeping them outside party controversy, a similar municipal service should be built up in this country, and the profession of town administration made a more lucrative and attractive one.

I am not suggesting there should be any interference with the elected councillor, though, with an improved status in the municipal civil service, it might be possible to relieve the elected member of much of the irksome administrative detail. Often many busy and capable men are deterred from entering municipal life by the amount of time it takes up, and it is important to attract the very best brains.

There is no more interesting work than service on a local authority; in many ways it gives more opening for ability than Parliament. Except a man should get into the Government, or show outstanding debating facility, a Member of Parliament often finds that there is very little scope for his energies. Each councillor in a local authority can take his share in administration through the committees to which the officers report, and he can actually feel he is taking part in the government of his locality. If this book of mine stimulates more men and women to interest themselves in London affairs, it will not have been written in vain.

The very size of London is its strength. It makes its problems big and it wants big men with large ideas to solve them. There is much to find fault with, but much more that is good. And the way to get things right is for more citizens to feel their responsibilities and to lend a hand in making London a fine town to live in, well ordered, and worthy of its position as a capital city, of its traditions and its history.

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